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THE
2 LIBERTINES:
A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Sed omnes una manet nox,
Et calcanda semel via lethi.

HOR.

But see a reverend form arise,
With beck'ning hands and awful eyes;
"Where La Trappe's silent vot'ries weep,
"Or virgins midnight vigils keep,
"The cloister drear, the hallow'd gloom
"Break the dark distance of the tomb,
"Ah! thither, restless rover, flee,
"And there sweet peace shall lodge with thee."—
Vain boast of frantic zeal and sullen care,
Praying, 'mid sighs and groans, or musing in despair.

DYER'S ODES.

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY W. WATSON;

FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATER NOSTER ROW,
LONDON.

1798.



THE LIBERTINES.

CHAPTER VII.

“ 'Tis policy and stratagem must do
That you affect; and so must you resolve;
That what you cannot, as you would, atchieve;
You must perforce accomplish as you may.”

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

IN the first Chapter of this work mention has been made of the initiation of Alexo into the monastery of St. Dominic. After that ceremony was performed, the perfidious Roderigo retired to a castle in his possession, and which was situated in New Castile. A cavalier, apparently of distinction, was soon after received into his family; but no person in the household, except Roderigo, knew any thing concerning him, or the object of his visit. He generally devoted his evenings to contemplation in the solitudes of the gardens which belonged to

the castle, or in some silent walks that were contiguous to a ruinous chapel, at no great distance from the walls of the edifice. He played exquisitely upon the flute, and was a poet. The following Ode was written by him, as he sat sequestered in those gloomy solitudes, musing upon past events.

ODE

TO CONTEMPLATION.

NOW ev'ning dim appears—that much lov'd hour
Of sweet tranquillity and rural ease:

When far afield is heard
The ploughman's simple song;

And from the bean field sings the lab'ring bee,
Warn'd homeward, by the coming shades of night,
And dews that gently fall
On ev'ry drooping flow'r.

With Contemplation let me seek to dwell,
In wild romantic vale, or ruin dark,
Where the swift-circling bat
Flits in the twilight way.

And oft, in sheep-cote near, the pleasing sound
Of warning bell is heard; as Philomel,

In Echo's mournful haunts,
Sings her sad tale of woe.

Or if by musing mem'ry fondly led
To poor Matilda's turf of fading flowers,
Meet me in holy guise,
O, Maid! rever'd by those

Who love to shed affection's hallow'd tears,
Unmark'd at night, when through the fleecy clouds,
That veil her azure sphere,
The wan moon dimly shines.

But when drear Winter saddens all the plain,
And by the cheerful fire, at close of day,
I hear the bleak winds mourn,
Around my reed-thatcht hut;

The Muse my lonely hours shall oft beguile:
And thou, sweet Maid, the willing mind shalt store
With pity, meek content,
And friendship's sacred law.

As night appears, big with the wintry storm,
Then shall the glimm'ring lamp, with cheering ray,
Beam o'er the neighb'ring plain,
Or mountain's lonely fide:

For oft poor travellers benighted stray,
Wide of the village path, at that dark hour,
When not a watch-dog barks,
Or distant sheep-bell sounds.

Or, ling'ring onward, fear the chasm's depth,
 Conceal'd by drifted snow ; as the cold blast
 Howls through the leafless thorn,
 And windings of the steep.

One evening, as he was returning to the castle from his solitary retirement, a girl, apparently the daughter of a cottager, delivered him a billet, which contained the following mysterious admonition.

“ Put no confidence in Roderigo's friendship : he is a villain. If you watch in the gallery of the great hall when the clock strikes two, something may probably happen, to confirm my assertion.”

He ordered a fire that night to be lighted in his chamber, and retired early to rest. His books alone afforded him amusement until midnight, when he laid down upon his couch, and fell into a light sleep. The clock was striking two as he awoke. He armed himself with a dagger, and proceeded to the gallery that looked into the great hall. A solemn stillness reigned in every part of the castle. As he descended into

the hall, the glimmering of a light at the upper end of the gallery revived his hopes of discovering something of importance.

The light continued to approach. He cautiously ascended the stairs, and discovered old Dorinda, the housekeeper, enter the mysterious chamber, with a basket upon her left arm, and which was apparently filled with provisions. His curiosity prompted him to follow her; for, as no person but Roderigo and the confessor were ever permitted to enter that room, he felt an unusual degree of anxiety to discover the secret of the chamber. He listened at the door, which was left ajar; and concluded, from the stillness which prevailed in the chamber, that he might enter it with safety. He gradually opened the door, and by the faint light of the morning, which shone through the window, he perceived the floor in many places crimsoned with blood, and that the bed curtains and furniture, although fallen into total decay, exhibited the same marks of cruel villany. The secret was now dis-

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covered. The scene before him sufficiently proved how far it would be prudent in him to remain a domestic of a castle, the retreat of murderous adventurers, and which, in all probability, would one day become his grave. He was about to quit the room, when a beam of light darted through a crevice in a door at the upper end. He daringly approached, and, opening it, found it led into a small passage, which communicated with one of the strong towers that were built for the protection of the castle. Incautious in his inquiries, he ventured into the passage, and had nearly been discovered by Dorinda, whom he accidentally observed at the extremity, fastening a strong iron door. As she held her lamp up, to observe whether she had secured it effectually, he suddenly quitted the apartment, and, reaching his chamber in safety, sat down upon his couch, overpowered with horror, and the tormenting pangs of reflection. Roderigo's character he had, since his residence in the castle, found out by his domestics

not to be of the first consequence in the estimation of mankind; the dreadful appearance of the chamber now confirmed his suspicions.

“ But the basket, which old Dorinda carried, could not,” he exclaimed, “ contain any thing for the service of the dead.”

He paced the room in wild disorder, his mind harassed with the strange and unaccountable adventure he had met with, until the broad day light illumed the neighbouring promontories round the castle. He retired to rest, and rose late in the day. Suspecting him to be indisposed, Roderigo visited him in his chamber; but his mind was too deeply affected with the circumstances he had met with, to engage in conversation with a man, whom he suspected to be the villanous promoter of murder and oppression.

He resolved, after some deliberation, to force from Dorinda the secret of the tower; and, as the clock struck twelve, he exclaimed,

“ Two hours more must pass, and I will then, at the hazard of my life, discover the truth of my suspicions.”

A voice at that instant cried out,

“ Beware !”

He started from his seat, and, seizing a dagger which he had unsheathed, and laid upon the table, looked fearfully around the apartment; it was gloomy, and free from any being but himself. The peasants of the neighbouring village had frequently told him that spirits had been seen in the castle, by Conrad, the porter, who usually took laudanum, to prevent those dreadful wanderers of the night from terrifying him into fits. His credulity, like poor Conrad's, almost got the better of philosophy; for every noise increased the alarm which had at first nearly overpowered him; and the cheerful blaze of a good fire alone kept him from sinking into a state of melancholy horror. The clock at length struck two; when, regardless of the supernatural warning he had heard, he extinguished his lamp, and pro-

ceeded to the great gallery, as before. The tranquil light of the morning, which, the preceding night, illumined, as if by design, the gloomy chamber of iniquity, was now obscured by clouds, dark and big with storms. He waited for the old housekeeper a full hour in the gallery; but every thing continued buried in the same death-like stillness. He stationed himself opposite the door of the mysterious chamber; but no sound whatever disturbed his reflections.— A violent storm soon after broke over the battlements of the castle. It shattered the summit of the north tower. The falling of the fragments awoke Roderigo, who slept in an adjoining chamber; and, ere the cavalier could possibly reach his apartment, he was met by the villain, who was dressed in his night gown, and carried in his right hand a naked sword. He held his lamp up, as he approached the cavalier, and exclaimed,

“How now! Does this awful thunder appal your spirits as well as mine? I have not rested well these three nights. Have

you been with the confessor ? If not, return with me to him ; he will be of service to us."

He started, as if suddenly recollecting some important circumstance ; and, turning to the cavalier, with a yawning smile,

" I have not," said he, " recovered a jovial carousal, which I had about three days ago with a traveller who stopt at the castle, and must have my sleep up ; the storm may continue, if it please the disposer of it. I make no doubt you have often felt the dreadful sensations which naturally affect a nervous man, roused from slumber by a thunder storm, and the consequent languid depressions that follow his recovery. I am ill at this moment with them, and must wish you a good night."

The first impressions of terror, which seized the cavalier when he saw Roderigo, had now subsided ; but, fearful his continuing long in the gallery might lead to some suspicion, he parted with him at the door of his chamber. The peculiar language of

Roderigo, his method of address, and appearance, awakened in the bosom of his guest the sure conviction of his guilt. The prospect of an escape began now to occupy his attention. His suspicions were too well founded, of Roderigo's having set spies to watch his conduct; for he never left the castle, without observing some one of the household following him; and to effect his escape, without the knowledge of Roderigo, he thought almost impossible. One night, however, made desperate by his reflections, he left his chamber, with the positive intention of murdering old Conrad, the porter, as the only means of gaining his liberty. As he passed along the gallery, the door of the mysterious chamber, he observed, was open as before. Regardless of the sudden trembling which instantly seized him, he entered the apartment, and, finding his way to the iron door, descended a rough stone stair case into a passage, which he traversed with great dread and difficulty, until he observed some person before him, with a

lamp. It was old Dorinda. He carefully observed her conduct; and, when she had gained the extremity of the passage, he saw, as she placed her basket on the ground, that it contained a small wine flask, a loaf of bread, and some fruit. She ascended a few steps, and unlocked a small door; and, as she threw it wide open, he discovered, during the time she descended for her basket, a female figure, with her eyes fixed upon the pages of a small book, which she held in her hand. The old beldam closed the door, when she entered the apartment; and he then approached near enough to hear his name mentioned, with a deep and affectionate sigh. Maddened with surprise and horror, he, in the first moments of his agitation, was about to rush into the apartment; when the door creaked upon its hinges, and Dorinda reappeared. He fled swiftly from the spot, and, secreting himself in an aperture of the wall, heard her mutter, as she passed by him,

“ Love, indeed! the devil fetch me, if

she shall ever see him, without it serves my purpose too."

In a few minutes the passage was in total darkness. He found his way to the cell, and rapped at the door.

"Who is there?" exclaimed some person, with a feeble voice.

He was unable to reply. There was something in the tone of it, that reminded him of his lost and beloved Cleanthe. He waited a few minutes, and rapped again, at the same time exclaiming,

"Cleanthe!"

A loud shriek pierced him to the very soul.—A dreadful pause of some moments ensued.—He listened at the door, and heard some one burst into tears.

"I cannot," said he, "possibly enter your prison; but tell me who thou art, and justice shall force the cause of your confinement to be explained by the master of this abominable haunt of villany."

"Am I deceived," she replied, "if I call upon my affectionate, my long lost love,

Bertram, to commiserate, and endeavour to relieve, the barbarous treatment his Cleanthe endures in this horrid prison?"

"Almighty God! It cannot be. Is it possible, that my Cleanthe lives?"

"It is. It is, my Bertram!" she exclaimed, with the wildest cries of horror.

He listened at the door.—A groan only, at intervals, disturbed the solemn silence of her prison. Suspecting she had fainted, he ran, raging with despair, up the passage, uttering the loudest imprecations against Roderigo, and praying for the interference of God.—A light shone upon the distant walls of the place.

"They are coming," he cried, as he dashed himself against the door of the prison; "they are coming, to drag me from my love. Cleanthe, your barbarous persecutors approach. I shall meet death, as the angel of eternal happiness, if you do not survive me."

She groaned, as if expiring.

"Thanks to my God! that groan was

the sign of death. We shall soon meet in heaven."

He threw himself on the ground, and laid for some time in a state of insensibility. In the interim Dorinda arrived.

"A man!" she cried, "and dead too. Holy father! who can it be? Oh Lord! it is the cavalier, who resides in the castle. Poor gentleman; his hands are as cold as the paws of a dead bear. Truly, this will be a pretty tale for Roderigo. How I shall be cuffed about for a month, if he knows that he died in this place; and how, in the name of sin and misery, shall I be able to carry him away?"

She tried the salutary effect of fanning him with her mantle. He gradually recovered; and, when he perceived the benevolent portress of the prison standing by his side, he rose in fury from the ground, and, darting upon the hag, exclaimed,

"Ah! miscreant, you are now at my mercy; give me instantly the key of that

dungeon, or I will sacrifice you directly to my fury.

“ Merciful father ! how you gripe me ! Let me tell you, Sir Bertram, I cannot do it.”

“ Not do it !”

“ Sir Bertram, Sir Bertram, recollect my situation ; a poor, helpless woman, debased with deformity ; and, if Roderigo should kick me out of the castle, pray, where am I to find a comforter ?—I cannot do it ; indeed, Sir Bertram, I cannot do it.”

She was retiring—

“ You stir not from this place,” he cried, “ until my request is complied with.—— Trifle with me no longer ; for, by the God above, I will murder you, if you persist in refusing me admittance to my beloved Cleanthe !”

“ Your beloved Cleanthe,” said the old beldam, with a smile.

Bertram interrupted her—

“ Here is a ring of inestimable value ;

take it: be my friend, and all the wealth I am master of shall be yours."

Many people know the real properties of gold. Dorinda was one of these connoisseurs. She produced the key, and threw open the door of the dungeon.

"I will return," said she, "when I think it is time for you to leave the cell."

What mind can conceive, what language express, the distressed situation of Bertram, when he beheld his beloved Cle-anthe stretched senseless on the floor! He knelt by her side, and gazed upon her, in speechless horror. He observed her bosom violently agitated. It was the effect of returning animation; but to him it appeared the convulsive struggles of the departing soul.

"She cannot live," he exclaimed, falling on her neck. "She cannot live. But we will be buried in one grave, that our dust may be united in the tomb."

As he poised the dagger at his breast, she faintly exclaimed,

“ Forbear! I live.”

He dropped the poniard on the ground, and raised her in his arms. She reclined her head upon his neck, and burst into tears. The effect of agonizing sorrow overpowered the faculty of speech. They continued for some time in this situation, until Bertram, pressing her to his bosom, exclaimed,

“ Have you no suspicion of the cause which condemns you to confinement in this horrible place?”

“ Oh! I am too well acquainted with the motive that induces my villanous persecutor to keep me in his power. Since that fatal night, in which you quitted Madrid for Andalusia, I have been the victim of the most abandoned cruelties.”

Here she related to him her unjust confinement in the prison of the Inquisition, by Jerome, father of the order of St. Dominic.

“ This castle,” she continued, “ is the property of a villain, under the influence of

that Inquisitor. For, when I first came here, I was treated with great respect; but on the arrival of a horseman, who brought letters for the master of the castle, I was thrown into this dungeon. I had received a wound in my left breast from the hand of Jerome, as I resisted his brutal violence on my person. The dampness of the dungeon increased an inflammation which had taken place; and, fearful it might endanger my life, I compelled Dorinda, by tears and entreaties, to represent my situation to her master. She did so; and I was instantly removed to a small room in one of the towers. His confessor there attended me with medicines, and every thing necessary for my comfort; and, when he reported me sufficiently recovered, I was again sent back to this place, where I have borne a long and unjust confinement, without the hope of ever regaining my liberty."

"Do not despair," cried Bertram. "We may possibly soon effect it; for I will to-morrow go to Madrid, and lay the whole

affair before the great officers of the law. They cannot refuse me their assistance, to bring this barbarous libertine and his confederates to justice. God only knows the extent of my extreme distress, when I returned to Madrid, and found your house totally deserted. I searched every street in the metropolis; I employed friends to make inquiries in the neighbouring provinces; I ranged through the suburbs of the city, as one distracted. No person that dwelt near you had heard of your departure, until I mentioned it. I gave myself up to despair, and the pressure of my misfortunes soon reduced me to the necessity of keeping my bed. Suspecting my father to be unacquainted with my arrival, and hoping an opportunity, so favourable for a reconciliation, would not be treated by him with contempt, I dispatched a servant to his house, with the information of my indisposition, and a pressing request that he would visit me. He returned, with an answer from my father's banker, that he had, soon after

the decease of my mother, initiated my sister into the convent of St. Catherine's, and retired into a distant country. This unexpected evil added to my misfortunes the dreadful malady of melancholy. My physicians then advised me to retire into the country, and unbend the mind from reflection, by the diversions it afforded; their advice was so powerfully seconded by my confessor (and who, from certain mysterious circumstances which I remarked in his behaviour, must be the very same friar, whose villany you have experienced) that I consented to adopt the proposal. Roderigo was introduced to me by the friar, as a gentleman of birth, fortune, and education, and who, he said, would willingly admit me into his castle (which was situated in the mountainous part of Estremadura, and well calculated for a temporary retirement), for the sake of society. We (I observed, to the great joy of the friar) became friends; and, previous to my departure from Madrid, I called at the grate of St.

Catherine's convent, and inquired for my sister. The abbess, informed of my arrival, came to the grate, and told me she had been dead many months. I requested to see her tomb.

"No man ever enters these walls," she replied, and, bidding me farewell, closed the door of the grating in my face. The situation of my mind, at that moment, cannot be conceived. I returned to Roderigo's lodgings, and, relating my adventure to him, in the most impressive terms begged that we might instantly quit the capital: But, sure, some angel, that ever watches over the fate of the unfortunate, must have befriended me, to have so fortunately discovered your retreat."

They were interrupted by a rap at the door. Dorinda entered the cell—

"It is almost high morning," she exclaimed, "and, ere long, Roderigo will be stirring. The keys of the private places in the castle I always delivered to him the first thing; therefore you must separate now."

“Do not tear us asunder so soon, Dorinda,” said Bertram. “Leave me here until you return at midnight.”

“By the father of the virgin!” replied the hag, “that will betray us to Roderigo, and then, Sir Bertram, you will be shut up in a prison, and I shall be minced alive for the hungry owls in his garden. No, no! you must part now; but I promise to conduct you here again at twelve to night.”

They embraced each other with affectionate rapture, and, after returning a thousand hallowed kisses, bade adieu, until the hour appointed by Dorinda for their next meeting.

Bertram and the old woman hurried from the passage, and parted at the door of his chamber. He laid down upon his couch, and tried to refresh himself by repose; but in vain. If he slumbered at all, Cleopatra stood before him in her shroud; and, if he mused upon his pillow, visionary murderers glided before his eyes. He spent the greater

part of the day amongst the ruins, or in the most private avenues of the garden. The pleasing hopes of restoring Cleanthe to liberty, alone occupied his thoughts. The strength of the castle, and the attachment of the domestics to their master, were disadvantages which he could not easily overcome; but he did not despair. Dorinda's conduct added fresh vigour to his hopes; and, early in the evening, he retired to his chamber, and passed away the hours in reading the poetry and romances of Voltaire. The castle bell tolled eleven—

“ I would that it were twelve!” he exclaimed, as he threw down his book, and opened the window of his chamber. The moon was just rising above the mountains, and, in the midst of his contemplations, he heard his chamber door open. On turning hastily, as he thought to welcome Dorinda, a man in complete armour approached him, and, waving his truncheon for silence, repeated with marked emphasis the following lines :

"Unsuspecting youth, beware!
 Trust not woman, but with care:
 Perfidy and murder wait
 Attendant on thy settled fate.
 Prize the stranger, prize the hour,
 That warns thee of a villain's power.

Immediately the unknown disappeared. He rushed into the gallery with his lamp, but no person was to be seen. The voice which he had heard in his chamber, and the appearance of the man in armour, almost deterred him from accompanying Dorinda that night to the prison; but in the midst of his deliberations she rapped at his door—

"We must lose no time" she cried;
 "follow me directly."—

The idea of again beholding his adored Cleanthe, instantly overcame every difficulty which had arisen in his mind, respecting his safety, and he joyfully accompanied the old woman to the dungeon. She gradually unlocked the door; and, when he rushed into the room, his terror and astonishment are more easily to be conceived than described;

for he beheld Roderigo with three of his confederates waiting his approach.

“ Ah, villain !” he exclaimed, on seeing Bertram, “ your conduct shall be rewarded as it deserves.”

They seized him, and loaded him with irons; and, in a few minutes afterwards, the lamp was extinguished, and they left him in the dungeon, raving with indignant fury and resentment.

At the lower part of the cell was a grating which looked into a subterraneous passage; and one night as he lay stretched upon the floor, almost senseless with grief and despair, he heard some person exhorting him to patience and courage. He approached the aperture, and discovered it to be a domestic of Roderigo's, whom he had usually employed as his own servant, from motives of humanity, the man being old and past the laborious duty of a menial servant.

“ Had you, Sir Bertram,” he cried, “ but obeyed my injunctions, all would have been well. I tried to warn you of your situation,

by secreting myself in your chamber: I found it did not succeed, and took an opportunity of appearing before you in armour for the same purpose; but all would not do."

"And was it you," replied Bertram, "that so advisedly foreboded the fatal consequences, of trusting myself in Dorinda's power? Had you but laid aside your mysterious habit, I should have attended to you, and been happy."

"Oh, my dear master! I thought you would believe a ghost, sooner than a superannuated old servant. Lord! one should have supposed the blood in the chamber you passed through, to get to the dungeon, would have frightened you out of your opinion. They say that Roderigo's sister haunts that chamber. Dear heart! this is a sad place."

"Oh, Gordez! torture me no more with such terrible and alarming tales; but tell me if you know of my Cleanthe, and whether you can assist me to escape from the power of this villain, Roderigo?"

“ Oh, dear heart! Cleanthe, poor dear, is confined in a dungeon, darker and more dismal than this, and no one person knows where it is, but that old deceitful devil, Dorinda, and Roderigo. And as for your escaping, by all the dead prophets!”—

“ Hark!” cried Bertram, “ I hear footsteps in the passage. Fly instantly, or you will be detected.”

He threw a billet into his prison, and disappeared. Bertram had just sufficient time to conceal it in his bosom, when the door opened, and four men entered his dungeon.

His irons were immediately taken off by one of them, who seemed to be the leader; and, in spite of his curses and supplications, they bound him with cords, and, threatening him with death if he continued his imprecations, conducted him into the court-yard of the castle. He there observed three horses and a small carriage in waiting near the gate; and, whilst preparations were making by the men for their departure,

Roderigo appeared at a window in one of the towers, holding Cleanthe in his arms—

“Thus,” he exclaimed, “I punish hypocrisy,” and apparently stabbed her to the heart.

Bertram at that moment felt the most unspeakable pangs of horror. He struggled to free himself from the power of his conductors, but in vain. They hurried him into the carriage, and, quitting the castle, struck into a wild path-way over the mountains, with their unfortunate and miserable prisoner.

The castle gates were scarce closed for the night, when Roderigo was awakened by a loud rapping at the outer gate. He summoned the porter to his chamber, and, inquiring the cause of the disturbance, received for answer, that one of the men, who had the care of Bertram, was returned, and requested to see him instantly.

The fellow was admitted. A long and secret conference took place—

“Are you sure of it?” cried Roderigo.

“ I know them well,” said the servant.

“ Order wine and provisions to be set before them,” said he, “ and desire the confessor to attend upon them until my appearance.”

He turned to his escrutoir, and took some papers from a small red leather case, and examined them with profound attention.—

“ These are certainly,” he cried, “ from this description of Jerome’s, the persons whom he most wishes to destroy. And, by the fellow’s account, my nephew is amongst them. They shall not see the dawn of to morrow. No, it shall be done to night.”

It was the unfortunate Don Alphonso and his party, who, from a pressing desire to reach the capital without the least delay, had entered upon the mountains too late in the evening to cross them before morning; and, having accidentally met the gang, conducting Bertram on his journey, politely inquired of them their nearest way to the first village; but were answered, that it was nine leagues distant. The man mentioned

the castle of Roderigo, as being inhabited by Augustine friars, and faithfully promised to conduct them to it without harm or hazard. They knew the benevolent inhabitants of religious houses usually lodged travellers for the night with great hospitality; and, not feeling themselves very much disposed to pursue their journey, they desired the man to lead the way, promising him a reward, if he proved worthy of it.

As they were conversing upon different topics, with much gaiety and pleasure, the confessor, who was seated at the top of the table, suddenly feigned sickness, and disappeared. No person of the household, after that moment, they thought would appear in the hall again; for they constantly heard people hastily passing up and down the stairs, doors opening and shutting in the galleries, and, at intervals, loud imprecations, seemingly uttered by men in the execution of some important charge.

“I fear,” said Alphonso, “that we have fooled our lives away; these unusual and

inhospitable circumstances lead me to suspect this castle to be the secret haunt of villany."

At that moment they heard several voices chanting a beautiful chorus of an hymn. Alphonso laid his sword upon the table, and, climbing up to one of the windows which opened into the garden, observed, with a great degree of astonishment, six men, accompanying a woman who was arrayed in white. She carried in her right hand a wax taper, and, in her left, a tablet, on which he indistinctly discerned figures in different attitudes, carved above a long inscription. They approached the castle, and entered one of the towers.

He had scarce time to communicate this strange and mysterious ceremony to his friends, when the large folding doors were thrown open, and the procession entered the hall, preceded by the confessor. The lady approached Clarinda, and, taking her by the hand, presented her to a fat friar, who introduced her to the next, and he to the

third, and so on, until she had received the holy salutation from the whole company. The same mode of etiquette was also observed to Alphonso and his friends. This unaccountable farce completed, the tablet was presented to Alphonso, who read aloud the following words, which were engraved under the emblematical figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity :

“ The Augustine friars, who inhabit this castle, are devoted to religion, and the faithful discharge of their duty towards their fellow creatures. The poor are at the gate of their sanctuary supplied with food and raiment, the rich receive their benediction, and the bewildered traveller an hospitable reception, until he wishes to depart on his journey.”

The procession returned from the hall the way it came, and immediately lamps were brought in by two female servants, and the party conducted to separate chambers. This holy ceremony ill accorded with the blasphemous expressions they had heard

uttered in the gallery. Suspicion was now completely awakened in the minds of Alexo, Jacques, and Don Bertram; and, as they were retiring to their respective couches, Alexo observed a paper slip under the door of the chamber. He took it up and read it to his friends: it contained the following words:

“Open the door, and admit a man who is your friend; *he* has something of importance to communicate.”

They consulted upon the propriety of such a step, conceiving that a party of banditti might rush in, and put them to death without mercy. The man rapped gently, and exclaimed,

“Admit me; on my life, I am your friend.”

This circumstance determined them to see the stranger who requested so extraordinary a measure. It was a man wrapped in a soldier's cloak; and when he entered the chamber, pulling his hat from his brow, he exclaimed,

“ Have you no recollection, Alexo, of the man who introduced you to the jew at Madrid, as tutor to his son ? ”

“ My God ! is it Pedro ?—Then mischief is at hand.”

“ Not quite so bad as that, Sir. To be sure, I once played you a knave’s trick ; but I am now your friend. The man who inhabits this castle is your uncle.”

“ Gracious God ! ”—

“ Hear me. The fellow who conducted you here is Gaspardo, well known to you all, I have no doubt.”

The party surrounded him.

“ Hark ! ”—He stepped softly to the door, and secured it.

“ Roderigo’s title to this domain is written with blood. Deeds of the most horrid nature have been committed within these walls, by those villains whom you saw in religious clothing. I have a knowledge of many private passages in the castle, that lead into a ruinous chapel at some distance from the walls. One of them communi-

cates with Alphonso's chamber. We must not trifle away our time ; for if you do not quit the castle this night, you are totally lost."

"How are we to reach the chamber of Alphonso, unobserved," said Alexo.

"Follow me ; all the inhabitants are, at this moment, watching upon the towers, for the approach of several of their companions, whom, it is supposed, are overtaken by a band of armed peasants."

They quitted the chamber, and, proceeding to the room where Alphonso slept, with utter astonishment and horror, perceived it secured by a padlock on the outside. Observing, however, through a crevice, that his lamp was burning, they immediately apprized him of his situation, and promised, if no accident happened to them, to come by a private way to his chamber.

"Now," said Pedro, "we must make a desperate effort, and gain the holy tower. We can from thence get into Alphonso's chamber."

As they followed him along the gallery, they could distinctly perceive lights upon the towers through the windows of the hall, and observed, with great joy, the old porter and Dorinda fast asleep before the fire.

"All is well," cried Pedro: "the two guards are safe. In a few minutes we shall be out of danger."

They descended a flight of steps at the end of the gallery, which led into a room that communicated with the tower. They then explored their way, in total darkness through a winding passage, to a small door at the summit of about thirty steps. Pedro rapped rather loud, and called out, "Alphonso!"

He answered, and inquired how he was to be delivered from his perilous situation.

"You will find," said Pedro, "a small door immediately behind that part of the arras where you see St. John's head on a charger."

He had scarce spoken these words, when they perceived the light shine under the

door. Pedro instantaneously unlocked it, by means of the housekeeper's key, which he had stolen from her whilst plying her with the best wine in the cellar. They took the almost expiring Clarinda in their arms, and following Pedro, through several subterraneous passages, arrived, without discovery, at the outlet. As the morning was on the point of breaking, Pedro, when they entered the ruins, extinguished the lamp. He then desired them, with a peculiar degree of earnestness, not to stir from the spot until his return.

“Return!” said Alphonso: “what! do you mean to desert us?”

“No, no; the mules, I expect, are ready saddled in an adjoining valley. A confidential friend is stationed there with them, but, for what purpose, he knows not.”

After repeated assurances of his fidelity, they suffered him to depart. During his absence, those tedious moments were wasted by the travellers with a degree of dreadful apprehension; for Pedro's character was

well known to Alexo, and his solemn protestation of friendship and integrity appeared to him only as a veil to cover his rascality. Their fears, however, were soon dissipated; for the fellow arrived punctually to his time, with three mules equipped for a journey. They instantly mounted the animals, and, in a few minutes, gained an open plain. As they rode furiously along the waste, they observed the light of torches continually flashing through the windows of the chambers and towers of the castle.

"We have just escaped it," cried Pedro; "the storm is brewing; lights appear every where in the castle: this way, gentlemen, this way."

He struck into a beaten path-way, which they found led to the high road. The village steeple soon appeared; and, before the sun had risen above the summit of the mountains, they alighted at a small inn, near the entrance of the hamlet.

They continued there but a sufficient time to refresh the beasts and themselves,

when they hired a vehicle, and proceeded with all possible dispatch to Madrid.

They had, in their way to their hotel, to pass the monastery of St. Dominic. The vesper bell was tolling, when they arrived in sight of it; and, as they passed the gate, Clarinda, seized with a sudden horror, caught hold of Alphonso, and burst into tears. They observed, with indignation, several sanctified priests upon their knees, in the porch, before a wooden image, probably that of St. Dominic, whose blasphemous villanies first produced the execrable institution of the Inquisition.

Some days elapsed before they ventured abroad; during which time they satisfied themselves as to the reality of the proclamation they had seen upon the road. They found it posted in the public places at Madrid, and learned that it was formally read in the streets by the officers under the crown.

The dreadful ravages of time are never so faithfully observed by any person, as by him, who returns, after an absence, to the

place of his nativity. Alphonso found many of his best friends in their graves, and others scattered, by a variety of causes, in distant parts of the world ; the few, however, that remained, welcomed him home with the most heartfelt congratulations, and promised him their interest, and personal assistance, to procure, if possible, redress for the unwarrantable injuries he had suffered.

CHAPTER VIII.

" Hell, from her gulph profound,
 Rouses at thine approach; and, all around,
 Her dreadful notes of preparation sound."

MASON.

ALTHOUGH Jerome triumphed in iniquity, without a rival, his mind became the prey of the most tormenting sorrows. He found no comfort in religious reflections; for, having mocked and despised them in his heart, they afforded him no consolation in those hours, when the mind, weary of sublunary pleasures, seeks to repose itself in the anticipation of comforts beyond the grave.

Sometimes he would leave his cell, at the hour of midnight, and wander in solitary and unfrequented walks. Sometimes he would meditate amongst the tombs in the burying ground of his convent; but,

in contemplating those awful monuments of our mutability, he was soon unusually overpowered by the piercing sensations of horror. The shades of the many victims to his cruelty glided before his eyes, as he paced, with unhallowed steps, the consecrated earth. His consequence, his power, his authority, soon became the subject of general contempt amongst those who before trembled at his word: for, when intelligence was received at St. Catherine's, of Bissare's death, a sister from a convent in a provincial town was appointed to succeed her in the office of lady prioress; and, a few nights after she was installed, the unfortunate Amantha came to the gates of the priory, and demanded admittance; her story being told, she was instantly received under the protection of this abbess, whose piety and benevolence endeared her to all the sisterhood of her own monastery, and to those who knew her without the walls.

Jerome was then, for the first time, positively denied admittance into the convent

of St. Catherine's; and the monks of his own order gave him to understand, by private marks of contempt, that they only waited for a favourable opportunity, to banish him from the sect with infamy and disgrace.

"Am I," he would cry, "to be made the sport of female arrogance, and monkish indifference? Is friendship to be estimated only in proportion as we extend influence and authority? Have I lived to be deserted by the sycophants that so late revered the very earth I trod upon? They shall find me quick to feel their scorn, and severe in my revenge."

One evening, as he sat at the window, observing the sun beautifully illumine the heavens, a man from the prison rapped at his door, and brought him information, that some unknown gentlemen had been at the council chamber several times; and special conferences, in consequence of their appearance, were held continually amongst the Inquisitors.

"There is a fellow," said the ruffian, "whose name is Pedro, and he says he knows you, and sends his respects to you."

"Damn him!" exclaimed Jerome, with a wild terrific stare: "had the devil but been in possession of that villain's soul, I should have triumphed over the malice of my enemies. I am totally lost: he knows my character well. Go back to the prison, and watch the conduct of the officers; procure, if possible, intelligence, as to their proceedings, through the means of the secretary; he is not proof against bribery—and you shall not fail to be rewarded: look to what I command. Sincerity has been uniformly displayed in your conduct; desert it not at this critical period. Go, and remember, I have been your friend."

The ruffian retired.

"This is the time," cried the monk, "when the secrets of my heart involve me in the deepest horrors of reflection. Nature seems to be enthralled with one cold and icy chain, that binds me to anticipation and

distress. I cannot quit this scene of misery; my steps are watched: the villain Pedro hunts me from the abode of men. If the circumstances, related by the assassin, should prove true, shall I suffer myself to be exhibited at the *auto du fe*, a martyr to the vengeance of an Inquisitorial Judge? No. Sooner shall some fatal drug close these eyes in endless oblivion, than the last moments of my life be devoted to public penance upon the scaffold."

Here some person rapped loudly at his door. He cautiously inquired who was there; and finding it to be the ruffian, from the Inquisition, admitted him.

"Oh! it is all over with you," exclaimed the man. "Orders are issued, to examine the secret cells and hiding places of your convent and St. Catherine's, and I fear you are the principal object they are in search of."

"They shall have me," cried the friar, indignantly; "but not to hold me up to public scorn, or torture me at the peaceful

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hour of death with flames and exhortations. You have sensibly obliged me," he cried, and threw a large purse of valuables upon the ground. "Leave me, and keep your council."

At that instant the porter of the convent entered his cell, and delivered him a billet, which, he said, was left at the gate, by a youth of about fifteen.

No expressions can paint his horror and confusion when he read the following words :

"Jerome, Alexo is in Madrid. Although the death of the unfortunate Francis has deprived him of the means to bring before the state Inquisitors testimonies of your guilt, which must have inevitably doomed you to death, yet no opportunity will be lost to effect it.

ALEXO."

"The time is come," cried the terrified friar, "when confession may administer comfort to my sinking spirits. He sat down and wrote the following letter :

“ TO DON MEDILLA DE GRADO, GRAND
INQUISITOR.

“ This letter contains the private confessions of a man, whose life has been devoted to the blackest of human villanies. Murder, robbery, and debauchery, have constituted the chief part of his studies. The sacred altar has been prophaned, vows violated, and the consecrated tombs of saints converted into dungeons for the victims of his treachery. He has been taught by his religion, to hold, as a sacred fact, the certainty of salvation, if absolution could be administered to the dying, before the soul departed from the body; and if penitence can now shelter him from the vengeance of his God, how glorious was the hour when first he imbibed its conciliating and adored precepts! He relies upon the faith of the Catholic creed for the mercy of his God. He implores that forgiveness of sins, which mankind are taught to expect from contrition. The night is far spent, and he shudders at the approach of day; for, at that hour, you will find his

body; but the soul will be precipitated into eternity.

“ Observe, and execute, the following commands :

“ CONFESSIONS.

“ The beautiful and once beloved Cleanthe, daughter of Don Alphonso de Berida, whose death has been generally admitted, is alive. Yes! she lives, to triumph at the fall of her enemy, her betrayer, her deluded persecutor. Clarinda is confined in a castle, the property of one Roderigo, uncle to Alexo, formerly a monk of my own order, and which stands in a valley near a range of mountains that are contiguous to the town of Meides, in old Castile. Let the owner be seized, and questioned concerning her: if he refuses to deliver her up to the officers of justice, let a female, of a low stature, and deformed, be threatened with the rack, and she will instantly discover the place of her concealment. Her mother has escaped from my possession, and her retreat has not yet been discovered. Her father is in exile.”

"Amantha, whom I purposed, with the assistance of De Carros, to murder in the chapel of St. Dominic, is now living with the abbess of St. Catherine's."

The clock struck the hour of twelve ! The pen dropped from his hand. He started from his seat.

"What is this," he cried "that thus appals my sinking spirits? Are the visitations of hell to be endured here and hereafter?—Oh God!"

He pressed the crucifix to his lips ; but that holy talisman failed in the effect. Its power, in restoring comfort to the wretched, was now no longer acknowledged. He dashed it on the floor, and turned to finish his confessions; but, observing in the sky streaks of light that foretold the approach of morn,

"I must away," he exclaimed, "and procure the means to save me from a public exhibition. My cell must be my grave. I cannot rest. The torments of hell surround me. The very air seems infected,

as I breathe ; and nature groans beneath the load of my infamy. To morrow—great God!—to morrow—and I shall discover the awful mystery of eternity !”

As he was hastily proceeding through the cloisters, to the elaboratory, for a medicine,

“ To root out the written troubles of the brain,”

two men, habited as Alguazils, seized him by the throat, and dashed him on the ground. He struggled, but in vain. They bound him with cords, and conveyed him to a dungeon, in the fatal prison, where he had so often exhibited his villany and despotic authority.

The next night he was led to the private judgment hall, and examined at the tribunal. He there observed one of the Inquisitors, who condemned Biffare, sitting in judgment upon him. He ordered four persons, who were standing in a circle at the extremity of the apartment, to advance. They approached ; and, when the monk perceived they were his accusers, when he saw the ill-fated Clarinda, with Alexo, standing

before him, in person, he shuddered, with signs of the deepest horror; and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed,

“ God be merciful!”

As they were proceeding to put some questions to him, two officers, who had been sent to search his cell, arrived in the judgment hall, and produced the paper, containing his unfinished confession.

As the secretary read the first, Clarinda shrieked aloud, and sunk lifeless upon the floor. Terror and confusion reigned in the bosom of every one present. He was remanded to his dungeon. And, as he passed back to his prison, he was reviled, and almost struck at, by the torturers, whom he had so often employed, and so liberally rewarded, for acts of villany.

“ Sic transit gloria mundi.”

When Pedro heard of the confession of Jerome, he recollected that a lady was brought, at midnight, to the castle of Roderigo, upon the mountains; but no one ever could discover what became of her.

Officers, with a party of soldiers, were dispatched, attended by Alphonso and Alexo, to surprise the castle, and seize the domestics, with their master.

Pedro, accompanying them as a guide, rode furiously before them. It was late at night before they arrived at the valley; and, on reaching the gate of the castle, they found it open, and the place totally deserted. They entered the hall, and ranged over the edifice with caution, searching every part with the greatest strictness; but no human being was found. As they were proceeding to examine the ruins, near the spot, by the light of their torches, they discovered a woman turn swiftly into a solitary avenue.

“There is the old beldam,” said Pedro, “that managed the affairs of the household, at the castle, and whom, if you recollect, we saw sleeping before the fire in the hall, with old Conrad, the porter.”

They instantly pursued her, and, before she could escape, came up with her.

"Ah! by St. Dennis," cried Pedro, "you are likely to meet with a reward for all your tricks now. Come, come! no whining, go with us to the castle: we want a little information, which, I have no doubt, you can give us."

She was hurried into the great hall, and, upon examination, declared, that the cavaliers, her masters, had been apprized, by a ruffian from Madrid, of Jerome's critical situation; and, knowing that he could discover the place of their retreat, they had fled away, and left only her behind.

"But," said Alphonso, "in what secret place is the lady confined, that was brought here some time back, about midnight, by two ruffians, habited as officers of the Inquisition?"

"Come, come!" cried Pedro, taking a pistol from his belt, "be quick in answering that question; or dread the consequence!"

The old woman immediately sunk upon her knees, and exclaimed, in the greatest agitation,

“Spare my life! spare my life! and I will conduct you directly to her prison.”

This they promised, and she led them to the ruins; when, after traversing a variety of subterraneous passages, they arrived at a small tower, where they found Cleanthe, stretched upon a bed of straw, in the most melancholy state of existence.

The feelings of Alphonso overcame him, and he swooned in the arms of a soldier.

The unfortunate victim of villany was taken from her dungeon, and conveyed to the hall of the castle, where a fire was lighted, and the wretched girl informed that she was restored to liberty, and the protection of her father.

She fixed her eyes upon her surrounding friends, with a terrific glare; and, when Alphonso called her by name, she started from her seat, and, supporting herself against the wall, exclaimed, in the voice of wild and disconsolate frenzy—

“And do you think, by artifice so shallow, to convey me back to that hellish mon-

fter, Jerome? Why am I to be distracted with a repetition of ills that never can be rooted from my memory? Oh! let me return to my dungeon, and make that bed of straw my grave. I am weary of my life. Bertram is dead; and I would that I were laid by his side: for the world is filled with villains! His spirit has often whispered to me, that, amongst the angels in heaven, I should live in peace and happiness."

"Am I so altered," said Alphonso, pressing her withered hand affectionately, "that you cannot recollect your father?"

"Father!" she exclaimed, shuddering with horror; "I have no father. Great God! they tore him from me, with cruelty and injustice; and now, perhaps, he wanders through the world, friendless, and in beggary. Religion is a curse upon mankind; it deals in blood. The holy father, Jerome, murdered my mother: but she is in heaven; and we should not disturb the spirits of the blest, nor speak of the dead, but in prayer. Oh, my head!"

She burst into a flood of tears, and sunk lifeless in her father's arms.

Whilst they were anxiously waiting her recovery, a soldier came in, almost breathless, with the intelligence, that the old woman had discovered the retreat of the robbers, and that his comrades were engaged in a desperate conflict with them. The greater part of the group which surrounded Alphonso and his daughter immediately ran to their assistance, whilst a few remained in the hall to protect them from violence.

As they attentively listened to every noise which entered along the galleries of the building, they perceived, through the gothic windows, a great light in the air. A man entered the hall, and cried aloud,

“The north wing of the castle is on fire!”

They immediately hurried, with the distressed Alphonso, and his almost expiring daughter, to the plain before the castle, and continued watching for the event of a circumstance so extraordinary, for some time. The flames rapidly increased; and, fearful

that the robbers might be masters of the field, Pedro was dispatched for the horses that were secured in the valley. He soon arrived with two, reporting that the others had broken loose, and strayed away.

Alphonso seated his daughter, in the best manner that he could, before him, upon one, and ordered Pedro and Alexo to mount the other, and make for the village he had conducted them to, on their former flight from the castle.

On their arrival at the village, refreshments and necessary comforts were immediately procured for Cleanthe; and, as the morning advanced, Pedro was dispatched at the head of a body of peasantry, who had been greatly infested with the robbers, under the deceitful appellation of holy monks of benevolence, to assist the soldiers. On their arrival at the scene of action, they saw the castle still in flames, and, making for the valley, met the soldiers dragging along with them three ruffians, in the habits of friars, bound with cords.

"Halloo, my brave fellows!" cried Pedro; "I have brought here a body of reserve; but I see you have conquered these infernal fellows."

"Aye, Aye," said one of the soldiers, "and warm work we have had too. Where are the gentleman and the lady?"

"Oh! they are safe," answered Pedro.

"That's well," said the soldier. "The villains thought they were apprized of the castle being on fire, and, I dare say, they expect they are consumed."

The rest of the troops soon after made their appearance, bearing some of their wounded companions.

The ruffians were conducted with great triumph to the village, and from thence to the metropolis, and lodged in the prison of the capital.

Alphonso arrived at Madrid, by slow stages, two days after the entry of the soldiers with their prisoners. It was thought prudent to convey Cleanthe to the house of a friend, until she was sufficiently recovered

to meet the piercing sensation, which an interview with her mother would unavoidably occasion.

Clarinda, the instant her husband entered the house, flew to meet him, trembling, and pale with fear, lest he should not have accomplished the object of his journey. She started with terror when she found him alone, and, eagerly embracing him, inquired for Cleanthe!

“She is safe,” said Alphonso; “but, fearful an interview, so unexpected and distressing, might operate with bad consequences upon her mind, not yet recovered from the effect occasioned by her sudden delivery from prison, I have procured her a residence in a friend’s house, for a few days, until her strength will permit her to see you. She is sadly altered, Clarinda!”

They both were drowned in tears, when Don Bertram entered the room, accompanied by Alexo and Amantha, whose death he had so affectionately lamented in the forest; but whom he found, from the con-

essions of Jerome, to be alive, and residing in the convent of St. Catherine. After the usual expressions of joy for each other's good fortune were over, Amantha, at the request of Clarinda, accompanied her husband to the house where Cleanthe resided, and attended upon her until she was sufficiently recovered to see her mother.

This interview, soon after, took place. A scene of more affecting sorrow cannot be conceived. The mother, drowned in tears, supporting her almost expiring daughter; the father, as if inspired by the agonies of grief, offering to his God the prayer of gratitude, for his merciful protection; whilst the surrounding friends mingled their tears with those of the once wretched family of Don Alphonso—formed a picture worthy to be illustrated by the bold and fascinating pencil of a Raphael or Corregio.

When Alexo was about to retire to rest, a message came from an Inquisitor, that a person, who was examining before him,

wished to see him, upon matters that related materially to his interest.

He immediately accompanied the messenger to the tribunal, and found the person, before the judge, to be his uncle Rodrigo.

"You are, no doubt," said the culprit, "surprised to find me in this situation; but when I tell you that I have been captain of a band of robbers, and in close connection with Jerome, your inveterate enemy, for many years, you must call it a miracle that I have escaped the punishments due to my crimes so long. Alexo, I am persuaded, from the evidence of that rogue Pedro, my death is certain. Before I am condemned, therefore, by this holy tribunal (for reasons justified by the conviction, that I am restoring to you nothing more than your right), I return back the deeds of your estates, entrusted to me by your father. You will find them valuable and uninjured."

He delivered the papers to Alexo, and, pressing his hand affectionately, bade him a last farewell, and the examination proceeded.

When the citizens became acquainted with the circumstances of Don Alphonso's family, and the tricks of the impious and debauched friar, it was the topic of conversation at every table and public place of entertainment; the trial of Jerome was looked for with a degree of anxiety never before experienced by the public mind; and the curiosity to see the unfortunate victims of his cruelty increased more and more every day. At length the day arrived, when the hall of the Inquisition was to be opened for the trial of Jerome; but the people were informed by a proclamation, that the Holy Inquisition, conceiving a public trial to be inconsistent with their accustomed mode of proceeding, had tried the friar privately, and banished him to a convent, at a distance.

"Banished!" exclaimed Alphonso, as he

accidentally read the proclamation in the streets, when he was proceeding to the hall with Clarinda, as an evidence against Jerome.

All eyes were upon him. He shuddered for the consequences. A letter dropt into the secret box of the Inquisition would have doomed him to a perpetual and miserable existence in a dungeon, for such a speech.

He returned to his home, and consulted upon the best means to preserve the peace of his family from the violence of future ecclesiastical associates. He knew the metropolis of a great nation must unavoidably contain the evils he wished to avoid; and the monks, he conceived (and with truth and justice), would not in the least suffer in their reputation by the public testimony of Jerome's immorality, from the bigoted prejudices in favour of their adored supporters of absolution and remission of sins. As Jacques had accepted a commission in the army, he determined to quit the capital, and retire with his family to a paternal

estate in the kingdom of Arragon, where their future days might be spent with comfort, and uninterrupted by the vicissitudes of fortune, the artful dissimulations of church and state, and the damnable injustice of the Inquisition. He communicated his intentions to his friend, Don Bertram, who resolved, without hesitation, to accompany him with his daughter, Amantha. The loss of his son now preyed upon his mind, to a degree, bordering almost upon melancholy; and, retiring into solitude, he conceived, would be more conducive to his happiness, than living amidst the noise and bustle of the metropolis.

When Alexo heard of this determination, he requested a private interview with Bertram.

It was granted.

"The stranger," said Alexo, "who sent for me to the judgment chamber of the Inquisition, Don Bertram, was my uncle. Grown hoary in the exercise of impious desires, he has now fallen a victim to the

laws of his country. Conscious of his certain condemnation, he returned me back the property my father left me, and which he had stolen from me by the artifice of forcing me into a monastery. Amantha's life was saved by me, and, since the discovery, made by Jerome, of her retreat, I have entertained an unconquerable and affectionate regard for her."

Bertram interrupted him.

"It is not to me, Alexo, that these confessions should be made, but to the object of your affection. To night, if you will, make your appearance at the house of Alphonso; the subject shall be discussed; but, for the present, we must separate."

Alexo had scarce taken his leave of Bertram, when he was accosted by Pedro in the street, who petitioned to become his faithful valet, and humble follower; ere the conversation was finished, and an answer given to Pedro's request, two men, dressed as alguazils, seized Pedro by the collar, and dragged him away to prison. Unfor-

unately for poor Pedro, Roderigo, in his confessions, discovered a few tricks of his companions, and them too of such a nature, as procured him, notwithstanding all the interest made in his favour, a public whipping in the market-place, and banishment to the galleys for life.

The long expected hour arrived, when Alexo was to hear the sentence of the Inquisitorial court of matrimony. He went to the house of Alphonso, at the hour appointed, and, after waiting some time in the ante-chamber, was ushered into the room, where Bertram and his daughter waited his approach.

“Alexo,” said the Don, “I have communicated your wishes to my Amantha, and she returns you love for love. Take her, Alexo; and know that it is to you only that the title to my daughter’s affection belongs.”

As soon as the necessary preparations were ready, the nuptials took place at Madrid, and the parties, with Alphonso and

his family, set out for their retreat into the kingdom of Arragon.

The new abbess of St. Catherine's, on hearing of Florella's flight from the convent, requested that notice might be given in every church and convent in the metropolis, for her to return to her order. This circumstance produced an inquiry concerning the fugitive nun, and she was discovered in the house of an under porter to the Inquisition, who, no doubt, held her in trust for the purposes of Jerome, but alledged, in excuse for his conduct, that he detained her only until an opportunity should offer for her to return in safety to the convent. She was received into the nunnery with all possible regard by the sisterhood, and joined in the general joy at the establishment of order, regularity, and virtue, in a house that had been sunk into disgrace by the prophane and abandoned conduct of Biffare. The honour of confessor was abolished, by the intercession of St. Anna with the minister of state, and all intercourse

with friars entirely cut off, as the first step to preserve the continence and character of the nuns and the nunnery.

For some time, however, after Jerome's banishment, the abbess appeared unusually low and thoughtful: she seldom frequented the little musical parties amongst the sisters, which she, at first, patronized with eagerness and pleasure; but sought out, at evening, the most retired parts of the garden, to weep, as was observed, by the nuns, over a letter which she seemed to peruse with a degree of sorrowful pleasure. Every vestal studied to afford her comfort and assistance, but she dismissed them with smiles and affectionate caresses. One night, about the hour of twelve, when Florella had retired to rest, some person rapped at the door of her cell.

"You may come in," said she, "for I have not barred the door."

It was the abbess.

She started with astonishment!

"Be not alarmed, my daughter," said

Anna, as she pressed her hand affectionately to her lips, "I am come to sit with you; my mind, to night, is not free from its unpleasant reflections, and I want consolation."

Florella immediately quitted her bed, and dressed herself; and, as she placed the picture of her mother in her bosom, exclaimed,

"I always take great care of this treasure; it is the picture of my mother; of her, whom I left when an infant, and have not seen since our separation. To me it is dearer than life; for it has preserved my person from the most violent and brutal outrage."

Here she accurately related to St. Anna the atrocious conduct of Jerome; but, before she had concluded her story, the abbess rose from her seat, and, clasping Florella to her bosom, burst into a flood of tears.

A mutual silence for some time prevailed, when the abbess broke from her embraces, and, fixing her eyes steadfastly upon the nun, drew a letter from her pocket,

and gave it her to read. The contents were as follow:

“ TO THE VIRTUOUS AND BENEVOLENT
PRIORESS OF ST. CATHERINE'S.

“ There is a nun, now, I am afraid, a wanderer upon the world, by name Florella; she was formerly of your convent, but fled from it, under some apprehension that Biffare would rigorously enforce the laws of the order, for a trivial fault. If she should ever return (and, perhaps, when I am no more, this may be the case), look upon her as your daughter; treat her with compassion and kindness; love her, and protect her; for she is the child of him who addresses you.”

“ Oh God!—It is signed, JEROME.”

The letter dropt from her hand, and she sunk lifeless upon her bed. The abbess had scarce recovered her, when the matin bell rang for prayers. They went together into the chapel, and, as they returned, the morning was just breaking. After wandering, for some time, along the shady walks of the

garden, to feel the refreshing air that blew along the avenues, the abbess recommended Florella to lie down upon her matress, and compose herself.

“To night, at twelve,” said she, “you may expect me at your cell, when I will explain the dreadful mystery.”

She affectionately embraced her, and they separated at the entrance of the cloisters.

Florella spent the day in her cell, overpowered by sorrow and anxiety. She counted the clock as it struck the hours, until the time of midnight arrived; when she slept softly into the gallery. It was quite dark; she listened with a degree of impatience, scarce to be conceived, for the footsteps of St. Anna. The light of a lamp at length beamed upon the wall fronting the staircase, and, in a moment afterwards, she saw the abbess appear, bearing, as before, a lamp and crucifix.

When she entered the apartment, Florella's health was inquired after with tender anxiety.

"I am much better," she replied; "but my mind will ever dwell upon that incident of my life, with the most poignant horror."

"Let it not," said the abbess, as she seated herself by the side of Florella, "for my sake, be the means of making you unhappy. You are indebted to God for your preservation, and to me for your misfortunes. The tale, which I am about to relate to you, may appear strange and unaccountable; but it will discover truths that cannot long be concealed from the world."

"Florella! I am the daughter of a poor cottager, who lived in the kingdom of Aragon, and supported his family, consisting of my mother and self, by industry and hard labour, until the hand of God swept him from the world. This misfortune happened when I was about eighteen. The year after the loss of my father is memorable by the death of my mother. Deprived of two affectionate parents, I was left, a young and unexperienced orphan, on

the world, in poverty, and destitute of friends. A neighbouring cottager, who had worked with my father in the forest, gave me an asylum in his house, until I could procure for myself a situation in some family. The castle of Don Astura was not far distant from the village where I resided; and, one evening, as I was weeping over the grave of my mother, a gentleman, in a hunting dress, accosted me, and affectionately inquired into the cause of my sorrow. When I had faithfully related the misfortunes I had experienced, he desired me to appear at the castle the next morning, and, in the interim, he would recommend me to the lady Astura. I was at the castle, by the time he appointed, and the same person appeared in the hall, and desired me to follow him. I did so: and he led me into a room, where I found the lady Astura sitting at an organ. She immediately rose from her seat, and, listening to my distresses with the tenderest compassion, promised me her countenance and protection.

I lived in the family, for some time, in the capacity of attendant on her ladyship's female companion. I loved, at the time of evening, to wander amongst the romantic walks of the beautiful garden, and listen to the parting songs of the birds that sheltered themselves in the solitude. I could play a little upon the lute, and delighted to practise my most favorite songs in a grotto, at no great distance from the grand walk that led to the castle hall. One evening, in the height of summer, after I had finished my store of songs, I sat at the window, to contemplate the grandeur of the hanging clouds, as the sun-beams shone upon them with unusual splendor; when my reflections were disturbed by the appearance of our confessor. He approached me with respect, and, taking hold of my hand, requested I would indulge him with a song. I complied. He seemed in raptures. He flattered me. He embraced me. My heart was open to dissimulation; and, believing the most violent and inconsistent protesta-

tions, I looked upon him as my affectionate protector. Our friendship or, rather I may say, love, increased every time we met; and, to feed my vanity, he had my picture taken by an Italian artist, who came to finish some fresco paintings in the concert chamber. But I, too soon, discovered the effect of my imprudence; for I found myself pregnant. Yes, my Florella! those untimely interviews gave birth to you. You are the offspring of Jerome and St. Anna."

She clasped her to her bosom in the transports of passionate affection.

"No sooner was my situation discovered by the servants, than I was ordered to quit the castle, and, horrid idea! found in Jerome, my seducer, a most inveterate persecutor. He represented me to the lady Astura in the most despicable light, and insisted upon my being driven from the castle, as an object unworthy of her protection and regard. In vain did I assert my claim to pity and candour; in vain did I request to tell my tale.—All ideas of humanity seemed

to have deserted her on the occasion; and I was thrust upon the world, in ignominy and disgrace, a friendless and disconsolate wanderer. It was a severe night in winter, when I saw the castle gate shut against me; and, strolling into the wood adjoining the grounds of Don Astura, I threw myself upon the ground, in hopes that death would put an end to my sufferings, before the morning: but I was awakened from a light slumber, about day break, by the forester, who compassionately took me again to his cottage, and suffered me to remain there until I was brought to bed. About that time his wife died of a fever, and, at his request, I staid with him for three years after my delivery. It was then that I determined to quit the world for ever. Jerome, I was informed, had left the castle, to supply a vacancy in the order of St. Dominic, at Madrid. This circumstance gave fresh vigour to my expectation: accordingly, one evening, I fled from the cottage,

leaving you to the care of the forester, with the following letter :—

“The wretch, who leaves with you her daughter, is tired of existence in the world; she seeks a sanctuary of nuns. If you take the child Florella to the castle, the Lady Astura will provide for her.

“From the time I entered the convent, to the hour in which I discovered you, I could gain no tidings whatever of your fate. My applications to the forester were fruitless: he constantly replied, that he carried you, according to my directions, to the castle, and had never seen you since. I endeavoured, by means of the porter, to learn something concerning your fate from the family, but in vain. Let us forget, my dear Florella, the name of your unfortunate and iniquitous father; I am now mistress of an asylum, where the footsteps of impiety shall never enter, to disturb the hallowed tranquillity that reigns within its walls. My life shall be devoted to religion; and may the horrid example of Jerome be considered

as an awful instance of the Almighty's vengeance, when his name is blasphemed by man!"

St. Anna inquired how Florella came by the picture.

"The lady Astura," said she, "when she sent me to this convent, gave it me, and told me it was the picture of my mother, which was presented to her as a specimen of beautiful painting, by Jerome: 'Keep it,' said she, 'as the sacred emblem of a victim to the most artful villany, and look upon me as your friend and protectress.' Her death happened soon after I entered the convent; and, ever since that unfortunate event, I have indulged no hope of meeting with a friend in the world."

The abbess clasped her to her bosom.

"But in me," said she, "you find a mother."

At this instant, footsteps were heard hastily pacing along the gallery.

"I cannot find the Abbess," some one exclaimed, as she passed the door of the cell. "My God! what shall we do?"

St. Anna entered the gallery. She was instantly surrounded by several nuns, who exclaimed,

“ Oh, mother! Melissa is at the point of death; she raves in distraction, and constantly calls upon the name of our deceased abbess, and Florella.”

St. Anna inquired into the cause of her insanity. No one could inform her.

The cries of Melissa now echoed along the gallery. It was near morning.

“ The sun shines,” exclaimed the distracted nun, but to illuminate my dark and hellish deeds. Bissare invites me to the clouds; but she sits upon a throne, encircled by a flame of sulphureous fire. Oh, Florella! pardon me.—Catherine! thy bloody form still visits me. Down, down, to the grave!”

A solemn pause ensued, and the abbess, attended by her nuns, proceeded to the cell, where the unfortunate female lay naked on her mattress. As they entered the apartment, she sang the following song, to an affecting and melancholy air—

Every night, and every morn,
 By a sister's cold death bed,
 I have dwelt, a while to mourn
 The sufferings of the sorrow'd dead.
 No flower or hallowed shrub grew there,
 No yew tree waved with fullen gloom;
 Nought, but Melissa's silent tear,
 Bedeck'd the murder'd vestal's tomb.

She burst into a flood of tears, as she repeated the last line. The abbess spoke to her. She looked piteously at the surrounding sisters, and began to sing again.

The abbess ordered all the nuns to quit the cell, except two of the elder ones, whom she requested to attend upon the distracted vestal. They remained with Melissa during the day, and at midnight sent a message to the abbess, that she wished to see her. St. Anna ordered them to retire to rest; she found the nun considerably better, and, seating herself on her couch, requested to know if she had every thing she desired.

“ Yes,” said Melissa, “ I want nothing, but peace of mind.”

She looked wildly at the abbess.

“There is a God, St. Anna! and, they say, he is just and merciful.”

The abbess took her by the hand.

“Be comforted, Melissa; and, if you have any circumstance upon your mind, that tends to aggravate the severity of your distressing malady, disclose it to me instantly.”

“I will, I will,” said the nun, shuddering with horror; and, folding her arms around her neck, “but let us first go to prayers.”

The abbess complied with her request, and mass was said by her bed-side.

After the ceremony was concluded, the nun begged that no person might be in the room, whilst she disclosed to her the secret which brought on her disorder.

When the abbess was left alone with her, she began, in the following manner:

“Look upon me as a murderer, detest me, as a fiend of cruelty; I have broken my vows, and violated the sacred duty of daughter, friend, and sister. Bissare, the late ill-

fated abbess, was my mother. Ah, lady! look not so stern upon me: she was an abandoned female, and instilled into my mind the principles of cruelty and injustice. She murdered Catherine, daughter of Don Juan de Castillas. She was called Jurgutha, to deceive the sisterhood.

“Great God!” exclaimed the abbess, as she rose from the couch.

“Stay,” cried the terrified nun; “you shall not leave me; you promised to hear my complaints, and comfort me.”

“No hopes of forgiveness left!” said the distracted nun: as she burst into a frantic fit of sorrow, “Lord God of heaven!”

The abbess continued,

“To precipitate into eternity the soul of a friend, is to incur the most severe indignation of God.”

“A friend!” cried the nun, as she started from the abbess. “Catherine was dearer to me than friend. She was, by the laws of our religion, my sister; her bones lie hid beneath the floor of this cell; but they

shall not be removed ; for I have prayed and wept over them until they are become dear to me. Oh, she was barbarously murdered !”

She paused.

“ There is a whispering in the room. Hark ! Heard you not a sigh ?”

The abbess again attempted to quit the room.

Melissa grasped her firmly by the hand.

“ You shall not stir from this place,” she cried sternly, “ until you have heard the conclusion of my story. It was a damnable and hideous deed, I acknowledge ; but my mother forced me to execute it. Yes ; Bissare stood over me, whilst I plunged this dagger in Catherine’s heart.”

She drew from beneath the bed clothes a bloody poniard, and gazed upon it with inexpressible looks of horror.

Bissare shrieked : but the nuns had retired to rest, and silence reigned in every part of the gallery.

A dreadful pause of some minutes ensued.

"The cause of her death," said the nun, in a kind of whisper, "was her being pregnant by a holy friar. I knew him well; but he now moulders in his grave: his name was Francis. I have ever repented the deed; and, whenever an opportunity offered, I haunted him, to distress his mind for thinking of such a bloody scheme. Oh! Biffare was a wicked mother."

She turned suddenly towards the abbess: "Florella too," she cried, "has been the victim of my iniquity. It was I, St. Anna, that advised Jerome, secretly, of all her haunts; it was I that laid the scheme for her ruin. It was I that detained her in the porter's house, purposely for the base designs of Jerome. Tell her, that I beg her forgiveness."

The abbess, no longer able to endure the horrors that the nun's confession occasioned in her mind, rushed from the room, and fled precipitately through the gallery, calling aloud for the sisters to appear. It was soon crowded with affrighted nuns. She

related to them the situation of Meliffa, and begged of the sisterhood to go instantly and attend her. They arrived too late; the unfortunate nun was found weltering in her blood upon the floor from a wound, given by her own hand, with the dagger that was encrusted with Catherine's blood.

They raised her from the floor, and endeavoured, with the assistance of Merenda, the sister physician, to stop the effusion of blood, but to no effect; the dagger had by repeated strokes penetrated too far, and Meliffa soon expired in the greatest agonies.

The abbess, after the accustomed ceremonies used on such occasions were performed, desired the body to be removed into the chapel for interment; and, attended by the whole sisterhood, she raised the floor of Meliffa's cell, and discovered the mouldering bones of Catherine. She had been buried in her dress, and the rosary and cross remained entire. Horror and distress reigned in every bosom. All recollected

the mysterious circumstance of Jurgutha's disappearance, and the solemn procession on the occasion; when the abbess gave out that she was taken to heaven, in the night, by an angel. The mystery was now unravelled. The bones of the unfortunate Catherine were collected, and deposited in the tomb which was before erected to her memory; and the remains of Melissa interred in the vaults belonging to the chapel of the Inquisition, as a mark of disrespect to her character. Solemn and pathetic dirges were annually sung by the sisterhood at the tomb of Catherine, which was looked upon as a shrine, sacred to the sufferings of innocence and virtue. Her cross and rosary were deposited in the church amongst esteemed relics; and her fate kept a secret from her friends and the public, to prevent the disagreeable consequences that would inevitably have resulted from the discovery of such a barbarous proceeding.

The convent now became the seat of happiness and strict devotion. St. Anna,

having been the dupe and victim of religious artifice and deceit, justly thought, that the confessional chair of the order was more fit to be occupied by one of her own sex, than the young lusty friars of St. Dominic; she therefore presided in it herself. It caused a great tumult amongst the holy men of the day; but she succeeded in her scheme, and, on those days which were dedicated to the saints, she usually heard confessions. The convent chapel was then open to the public; and, one evening, as she sat in state in the confessional, with her ear placed against the aperture, a voice whispered,

"Suppose, lady, I should, in those desperate hours of love, when nought is thought of but the attainment of the object of our hearts; suppose, I say, lady, I should break through the barriers of religion, and steal away a nun from your convent."

"You will be punished as you deserve by the Holy Inquisition."

As the person withdrew from the spot, St. Anna peeped through the aperture, and discovered a tall man, wrapped in a soldier's cloak, with a military feather in his hat, stalk down the aisle of the chapel. It was near midnight, ere she had received the ridiculous confessions of all the penitents present; but her mind was too much engaged, in endeavouring to unravel the mysterious question put to her by the stranger, to afford the delinquent much consolation, by her answers. She had not long retired to rest, when she heard some persons under the garden wall with music; she rose instantly, and opened the windows. The night was calm and beautiful; and, as the soft airs floated upon the breeze, she listened to them with an unusual degree of rapture and attention. In a few minutes it ceased. As she remained at the window, in expectation of hearing it again, she observed the form of a female glide down one of the avenues. Her senses were awakened; she no longer listened for

the music, but, hurrying on her clothes, quitted her apartment, and, relating her discovery to three confidential nuns, went, accompanied by them, into the garden, in search of the fugitive. They traversed the most secret parts, with no effect, until they came opposite a rugged tower that rose above the wall covered with ivy. They there discovered a man seated upon a projection of the ruin, apparently waiting for the approach of some person in the garden. As the moon shone upon the scene, they could plainly perceive him to be a cavalier of some distinction, by the diamonds which sparkled in his hat, and those that adorned the hilt of his sword.

“The mystery will soon be cleared up,” exclaimed the abbess; “no punishment can be inflicted on the sister, who encourages these unholy revels, that will equal the crime.”

She had not uttered the words a moment, when a nun appeared clad in a deep black veil.

"My love, my adored angel!" cried the cavalier, as he sprang from the wall to the ground, "I thought the night would have passed without my seeing you."

"Hush!" she cried; "my mother is awake. I heard her chamber window open as I descended the stairs in the tower next her cell. If she should detect us, I am lost for ever."

"Impossible," said the marquis, "by this sacred kiss, I'll—"

"Hold;" cried the abbess, as she rushed between them with a drawn dagger; "violate the chastity of those lips, and you die."

The shrieks of Florella instantly brought his attendants upon the wall.

"Fly!" said the abbess to her nuns, fly to the great gate, and cry through the streets the situation we are in."

"Hear me," exclaimed the marquis, as he threw himself on his knees, "hear me, before you attempt the sacrifice of my life. Suffer me to retire undisturbed from the

garden, this night, and to morrow I pledge myself to explain the whole of this affair."

At the intercession of the nuns, this request was not, without difficulty, granted. The marquis retired to his lodgings, disturbed to a degree by this unfortunate adventure. He cursed the impolitic speech he whispered, in a moment of levity, in the ear of the old abbess, as she sat in her confessional. He laid the whole night devising upon the best means to explain the matter to the abbess. At first he thought of concealing his birth and fortune; but, upon reflection, he supposed, that acting honourably, might, in some measure, be the means of quieting the tempest he had raised in St. Anna's mind. He therefore pursued this resolution, and wrote the following letter to the Abbess.

"MOST WORTHY OF YOUR SEX,

"The nun, with whom I am in love, being your daughter, I think myself bound by that circumstance alone to act with truth and honour. My affection is un-

bounded; it cannot be erased by contempt or inattention from any one but the object of my heart. Our meetings have been secret; but those hours have never been devoted to the licentious triumph of our passions. I am a nobleman; my title is the Marquis de la Meridas, nephew to Don Astura, who left me his possessions, which lie in the kingdom of Arragon. They are ample in the extreme. Let me rescue your daughter from the inconsiderate and worthless vows imposed upon her by her religion. I have it in my power to effect it.—Constant in my affection, I vow to God never to quit Madrid until she is in my possession, if you refuse me this request. Is it in St. Anna's disposition to bury innocence, virtue, and beauty, in the gloomy cloisters of a convent? Can she witness her daughter, in the prime of life, bending before the shrine of some departed saint, and telling a few amber beads, rather than have her a beloved mother of a happy family? Oh no! she will cherish the affec-

tion Florella entertains for me, and, by releasing her from her religious engagements, restore peace to my bosom, and happiness to hers.

MERIDAS."

He read it over several times; he found it not the exact prototype of his imagination; but his mind was too deeply agitated, to make it better. He dispatched a servant with it to the convent, and bid him wait for an answer.

When the abbess had in some measure recovered her confusion and terror, she ordered Florella into her cell, and peremptorily demanded the keys of her escrutoire. The girl at first refused to obey the mandate, by the accustomed artifice of bursting into tears; it had no effect upon her mother; she forced them from her, and, hurrying to her cell, opened the drawers with all the furor of an Inquisitorial familiar. She discovered nothing of any consequence; unfinished drawings, and preserved flowers, alone occupied its secret recesses. A

suspicious glance, however, from St. Anna, upon the countenance of her daughter, bathed in tears, procured the testimonials of Florella's guilt.

"Spare me, my dear mother, and I will discover all. There," she cried, trembling with dreadful apprehension, "there they are. You will find them all there."

She put into her mother's hands a small model of the Virgin Mary. The abbess examined it with attention, and discovered the lady to be hollow, with a little trap door at the bottom of her embroidered petticoat; she started with horror; for, on opening it, a multitude of amorous billets tumbled out of the lady's sanctuary. She read some of them with distraction. They were signed Jerome.

"Jerome!" she exclaimed, "Jerome! Oh God!"

"Mother, they are not the letters you want."

She ran to the table, and presented one from the number to her mother. The seal

bore an impression of Don Astura's arms. She started with surprise. At that moment a nun entered with a letter, directed to the abbess—She opened it with an unaccountable tremor—It was from the marquis—She turned to the affrighted Florella—

“Where did you first see him?”

“In the chapel of the Augustine friars.”

“And do you love him?” she exclaimed.

“Oh! my dear mother, beyond every thing in the shape of man, I have ever yet witnessed.”

“I must treat you rigorously,” said St. Anna, “for the sake of observing the rules of the order; but you will bear it with patience, and consider it only as a preliminary step to your future happiness.”

“Oh, my dear mother!”

“Hush! the nuns are in the gallery.—I shall summons you, in about an hour, to the parlour, in order to explain to you the enormity of your crimes, and pass the sentence adjudged upon you by the council of elders.”

She left the cell, and found a croud of nuns gathered together upon the stairs of the gallery. They dispersed at her request, each one conjecturing what would become of poor Florella. The abbess instantly dispatched an answer to the marquis's letter. It was to the following effect :

"DEAR MARQUIS,

"Come, instantly, to the convent, and desire to speak with me.

ST. ANNA."

Rapture sparkled in his eyes when he read those few emphatic words. He wrapped himself in his cloak, and went instantly to the convent grate. He demanded to see the abbess. As he passed through a part of the cloisters to the audience parlour, the nuns peeped at him with as much curiosity as if he had been a native of one of the new-discovered islands. As he entered the room, the abbess rose from her seat, and took him by the hand.

"Is it possible," she cried, "that the

Marquis De la Meridas can condescend to give his hand to the daughter of the ill-fated St. Anna?"

"And do you suppose," he replied, "that the daughter of St. Anna is unworthy to share with me my possessions. I love her, St. Anna! and, though born in Old Castile, would forego the greatest of all earthly advantages, to live with my Florella."—

"But mark me—If you have laid this scheme, purposely, to impose upon my credulity, and dishonour my daughter"—

"Merciful Father!" he exclaimed, as he lifted his eyes to heaven, "if I debase the character of a man, may I incur the wrathful vengeance of my God, and be delivered up to justice, as an example to mankind!"

He produced letters, which bore the signature of Don John De Modena, brother to his aunt: in which the abbess observed, he lamented that his nephew's affection should be placed upon an unattainable object; promises to apply to the pope for a dispensation, to release her from her vows,

and a friendly offer of any services that lay within his power, for the promotion of his happiness.

These letters had great weight with St. Anna. She had, during her residence at the castle, frequently observed, that Don John De Modena had the confidence of his sister, and, ever since the period when her husband was killed in a battle with the Moors, that she always looked up to him for advice and protection.

“ There is no one person on earth, to whom I should prefer my daughter to be united, than to the Marquis of Meridas. Your aunt befriended me in my distress, and to Florella behaved as a mother. But, although my daughter is not bound, by any vows, to a life of celibacy within the walls of this convent, several very serious circumstances occur, to prevent your immediate union. She has transgressed the strict rules of the order; and, in so doing, must suffer the punishment prescribed by the laws.”

"You will not," he exclaimed; "you cannot hurt her!"

"The punishment is severe; but when the clock strikes two, if you appear upon the same broken part of the wall, as you did when we discovered you, with a confessor, the marriage may be celebrated in our chapel."

"Oh God! the hour is two?"

"Yes."

"And with a priest, upon the broken tower?"

"Yes."

"Farewel then, till that auspicious hour."

He quitted the monastery, and retired to his lodgings, almost overpowered with the excess of joy, this unexpected change in his fortune created. He immediately dispatched a servant to the first convent for a priest. The good father arrived, stored with holiness and civility.

"My business with you, father," exclaimed the marquis, "is no less than to request you will marry me."

"It shall be complied with, good Segnor."

He was preparing himself to officiate.—

"Not now, my prince of sacrifices! but at two o'clock to morrow morning."

"At two o'clock to morrow morning."

"Yes." Can you climb a wall? and dare you marry me to a nun?"

"A nun!" cried the affrighted father; "not for the thumb of St. Paul."

"No; I believe that: but will you for the wallet of St. Peter, and its contents?"

He threw a purse upon the table, filled with gold. All ideas of virtue vanished; and, as the conscientious father slipped it into his side pocket (a trap, no doubt, for many good things)—

"Tell me," said he, in a whisper, "where I am to meet you, at the appointed hour?"

"By the north tower of St. Catherine's monastery."

"St. Catherine's. I will be there in waiting."

During this curious interview between the marquis and the friar, poor Florella

was, upon a long hearing before the council of elders, condemned to be confined in a prison, under the chapel, for the space of a month, upon bread and water. She heard her sentence with an affected degree of horror, that seemed to speak the language of contrition. It was mitigated to two days. Night drew near; and preparations were making for conducting Florella, with pompous form, to her prison. The clock struck twelve. The nuns had assembled in the great chamber. St. Anna seated herself in the midst of them, and manœuvred away the time, discussing unimportant subjects, until it struck one; she then ordered the procession to begin. It marched to the chapel with great solemnity, and, after having lodged Florella in her prison, returned to the convent. Exactly as the clock struck two, the marquis appeared upon the wall, supporting the trembling priest, who looked upon the probability of his falling from the tower, with more horror, than the crime of uniting a female en-

thusiast with a man of gallantry. He descended, with great dread and difficulty, and accompanied the marquis to the chapel. They found the abbess waiting their approach at the door. She conducted them to the altar; and, taking a lamp which she had secreted for the purpose, descended into the vault, where Florella was immured.

In a few minutes she appeared with the affrighted vestal at the altar. The marquis clasped her in his arms, and the priest immediately performed the ceremony. When it was concluded, St. Anna embraced her daughter, and, after bidding them an affectionate farewell, let them through a wicket into the street, to the great joy of the friar, who expected to ascend the wall again, without the assistance of Jacob's ladder, or the wings of Gabriel, at the hazard of his life.

St. Anna, the next morning, related the affair to the sisterhood. Expressions of alarm and astonishment ran through the whole multitude. Her marriage appeared

to them in a different light, to what it did to the abbess. They looked upon the transaction, as an act, unholy and impure. She wisely considered it as the most effectual step to secure her daughter in the possession of wealth and happiness. In a little time, the circumstance, so repugnant to the principles of the institution, was forgotten; and St. Anna, by her unparalleled conduct, became revered more than ever by the sisters. Florella seldom visited her mother, but, in her letter, said, she experienced, from the marquis, the most tender and affectionate regard. That her hours were crowned with splendor and happiness, and from her attention to the peasantry, residing near the castle, she had become their adoration.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Such a house broke!

So noble a master fallen ! all gone, and not
One friend to take his fortune by the arm,
And go along with him.”

TIMON OF ATHENS.

ONE evening, as Don Alphonso and the party were quitting a valley on the borders of Arragon, the big drops of rain, that fell at intervals, foretold the approach of a storm. They returned into the solitude, and, taking shelter in one of the caverns, waited patiently for the ceasing of the shower.

After the storm had continued with great violence for more than two hours, it seemed somewhat abated ; a transient beam of the setting sun illumined, for a moment, the summit of the opposite rock ; and, as Alexo looked into the valley, he saw the postillion rush out of the recess he had chosen for

the carriage, as one wild with terror. When he approached, he cried aloud,

“ I have seen him! I have seen him; by the Virgin’s purity have I.

“ Seen who?” said Alexo.

“ Oh ! the devil! he peeped at me several times through a hole in the rock, with eyes as big as the moon : he petrified the poor beasts with his sulphureous breath; and, no doubt, if I had stopped, he would have played his trick upon me in the same manner.”

The fellow’s appearance convinced Alexo his fears were not imaginary; and he desired he would conduct him to the devil’s apartment. They entered a solitary recess, where the carriage, with the horses, stood perfectly safe and uninjured.

“ How is this?” said Alexo: “ I see no alteration in either the horses or the carriage.”

“ That may be; but, by the rod of Moses, I saw him, and he went through

yon hole," pointing to a small aperture at the extremity of the cavern.

Alexo drew his sword, and desired Grado to follow him.

"Not for a cardinal's hat, would I venture to hunt after him. The devil is no such a pleasant fellow to meet in a dark cave."

"Then go and fetch the remainder of the party," said Alexo; "the secret avenues of this cavern must be explored."

On their arrival, Grado furnished him with a lighted torch, by means of a bottle of phosphoros, which he constantly carried about him, for fear of being benighted on the wilds, or forests destitute of inhabitants. Alexo had not penetrated far into the recess, before he turned to Bertram, who had followed him, and expressed his intention of returning; concluding, from the horrid appearance of the cavern, wet and infested with reptiles, that no human being could possibly exist in such a noisome place. When they had just reached the entrance

of the passage, a beam of light darted from a small aperture in the rock on the right hand side.

Alexo cautiously surveyed the spot; and, as he was about to enter, a man (bearing a lamp in his right hand, clothed in a coarse woollen robe, girded about him with a knotted cord, and with a beard of a considerable length) intercepted him, and with a designing frown, bade him depart.

“ I came not,” said Alexo, “ to interrupt the happiness you enjoy in this solitary place; but merely to satisfy my doubt, as to this cavern’s being the resort of a human being.”

The man waved his hand, for him to return.—He instantly quitted the recess; and, having reached the party, privately related his adventure to Alphonso.

“ Well, Segnor,” said Grado, “ have you discovered the print of his cloven feet? for they say, that rocks harder than adamant receive the impressions of his hoofs, if he happens to walk over them.”

At this moment a loud clap of thunder burst over the valley, and the storm, after a pause of some minutes, increased with redoubled violence. The beasts, terrified at the quick flashes of the lightning, became unruly.

Grado attributed this circumstance to the devil he had seen in the cavern; and, fearful of being swallowed by some infernal spirit, begged of them to depart instantly, and he would drive them to the village in no time. This proposal was universally rejected; for the ladies, fearful that the horses might overpower the rider, consented to remain in the cavern, until the appearance of the sky was such as to insure a dry and safe journey to the village. As they were waiting anxiously for the ceasing of the shower, Cleanthe sprang from her seat, and, rushing into the arms of her father, exclaimed,

“God of heaven! what dreadful form is that approaching us?”

Alexo turned instantly, and discovered

the anchorite he had seen in the recess coming towards them. When he had nearly reached the spot where the travellers were sitting, he thus addressed them:

“ Strangers, to me alone this gloomy habitation affords a pleasing asylum. To you, who are familiar with the world, it is alarming; and my appearance, no doubt, is horrid in the extreme; but, it is consistent with my own feelings, and the duty I owe to my religious vows. The night seems set in with an awful tempest, and the danger of crossing the plain, at the extremity of this valley, being very great after dark, if you will share with me the food that I am contented with, and remain in my retreat until the morrow, you shall come to no harm, and I will make you welcome.”

Distrust and terror seemed to sit on every countenance.

“ Nay,” he continued, “ look upon me for that which I am, a poor and harmless anchorite, one who studies the philosophy of nature, one who has shunned all inter-

course with the world, and seeks, in this solitary abode, the calm and pensive pleasures of reflection. I am no villain, but the victim of treachery. You seem to doubt the truth of my assertions; but, surely, if I was disposed to act the villain, four are sufficient to overpower one."

The travellers, who had been several times deceived, cautiously questioned him concerning his mode of living, and the cause for secreting himself in the solitudes of so wild and unfrequented a place.

"I cannot," said he, "explain the mystery here; but if you consent to pass the night with me, in my habitation, I will relate the history of my life."

The storm still continued with great fury, and the horrid idea of remaining in the cold and damp recess of the rock obliged them, reluctantly, to comply with the anchorite's request, and, drawing their swords, bade him lead the way to his dwelling. Grado was desired to loose the animals from the carriage, and proceed to a sequestered

part of the solitude, where the anchorite said he would meet him, and point out a secure place to lodge the beasts in, full of good pasturage, and sheltered from the weather. This injunction poor Grado was obliged to comply with, but not before he had repeated his stock of prayers for the safety of his person from accidents: the soul he left to shift for itself. The travellers, after following the stranger through several unfrequented path-ways, arrived at a decayed flight of steps, which the anchorite ascended, followed by his guests; and, opening a door at the top, he conducted them through a gloomy avenue of tall forest trees, that overshadowed a venerable ruin. The stillness of the solitude, the fluttering of the night birds as the light approached, and the rolling of the distant thunder, preceded by the blue streams of lightning, impressed them with sensations of horror and alarm. Their many narrow escapes from the premeditated designs of villany afforded them the mortifying reflection,

that credulity is a rooted failing in mankind, and seldom capable of being corrected by experience. They passed through a part of the cloisters that were standing, and, after some little difficulty, gained a wicket, which led into a small oratory, which was entire, and afforded a shelter from the inhospitable elements. On entering this hallowed retreat, they discovered a good fire blazing on the hearth, and a plentiful supply of dry wood piled by the side. A few old gothic chairs, and an oak table, were the principal part of his furniture. A number of books lay upon the table, and a large cupboard (no doubt the repository of many good comforts in the days of the holy friars, who inhabited the monastery) served him as a store room. He set before them fruit, bread, and some weak wine, on which they feasted, with an appetite proof against the whimsical niceties of the palate. As they were regaling themselves in this manner, and thanking the hermit for his bounty, a voice, without, was heard crying for assistance.

“Hark!” said Alphonso, “I hear the voice of some person without.”

Their swords were instantly drawn, and, expecting the hermit had betrayed them into the hands of robbers, they were going to sacrifice him to their fury, when he recollected poor Grado had been forgotten.

“I will instantly go in search of him,” said he, and, lighting a torch at the fire, left the chapel a different way to that by which they entered. Every one alike felt the severest pangs of suspicion and terror. The security a solitude so sequestered might afford to villains, created an alarm in the minds of the females, that almost bordered upon distraction. Alexo, in company with Bertram, began searching the apartment. They discovered nothing that at all confirmed their suspicions, until they lifted up an old piece of cloth which lay in a remote and dark corner of the building, when they discovered a coffin. Starting backwards, they appeared, as it were, chained to the spot with horror, which was perceived by

Alphonso, who, suspecting something more than common was the cause, contrived to amuse the ladies, in such a manner, that they did not witness their attitudes. Alexo lifted up the lid of the coffin, and, to their utter astonishment, beheld the mutilated skeleton of a human being, a bloody female garment, and a couple of gold rings wrapped carefully in a small piece of paper, a pair of white satin slippers, ornamented with gold fringe, were placed at the feet, and on the right side stood a small silver lamp. At the sight of this uncommon spectacle, Alexo shuddered with involuntary horror. Bertram carefully closed the coffin, and, laying the paul over it, begged Alexo to secrecy, as to the discovery. A light now flashed in at an old window near the door. The hermit soon after appeared with Grado, whose blooming countenance was become more than delicately white, occasioned by terrors he had undergone since they parted with him in the cavern. As the night advanced, Bertram, anxious, from

the singular discovery he had made in the anchorite's apartment, to hear the history of his life, ventured to request he would fulfil his promise, and begin it. He readily assented; and, after trimming the lamp and heaping some fresh wood on the fire, related his narration as follows:

“ In the younger part of my life, I was passionately fond of gaming, a vice that too frequently entails upon its votaries distress and misery. It was my fate to be one of those unhappy wretches. I sighed in poverty, under the disgraceful appellations of a gambler and a knave. My friends, who had so often enchanted me with that deceitful flattery, which is in general lavished upon the man who revels in the company of those domestic robbers, with money and credulity, forsook me in my distress, and I was hurried by one of them to a prison. During my confinement, I contracted an intimacy with a Portuguese, of genteel address and insinuating manners, who, for some unknown reason, was confined by the

state. He had a never failing purse, and we lived together in a state of affluence and luxury. One day he came into my room, as I was dressing to dine with him, and said,

‘I have received an order from the state
‘for my liberty; and, if you will accompany
‘me into Portugal, your debts shall be
‘paid, and a future maintenance provided
‘for you.’

“To this unexpected proposal I readily assented; and, after taking a jocular farewell of the prison, we proceeded to a tavern in the neighbourhood, and regaled ourselves upon the dainties of the host’s pantry. My brother, by some unknown means informed of my release, sent a message, that he wished for an interview, upon particular business; but, being upon bad terms with him previous to my confinement, I declined visiting him, and dismissed a servant with a letter to that purport. He was avaricious, bigoted to his own opinion, a man of immoderate ambition, and passionately

fond of women. To these vices he added contempt for the deity, mocked every mode of worship, and continually associated with men of abandoned and dissolute characters. My Portuguese friend advised me by all means to see him.

‘He is your brother,’ said he; ‘and, although he may have treated you in a manner unbecoming and imperious, yet the ties, by which you are connected, are so sacred, that no motive whatever should induce you to disregard them as mere formalities.’

“This speech operated upon me so powerfully, that I consented to his proposal, and we went together to his house. Our meeting was reserved. And when he heard of my good fortune, in having procured the esteem and friendship of the Portuguese, he became jealous, and now and then discovered the nature of his disposition, in sentences of irony, applied to me, and which ill-suited to accommodate our disputes. We parted at night somewhat more friendly

than we met, and the Portuguese, and myself, after bidding him farewell, went to the theatre. Before the curtain was drawn up, we entertained ourselves with indiscriminate remarks upon the company as they entered the boxes. Our inquiries and wonderings were continually answered by a little dapper sharp-sighted fellow, who appeared to know every individual, with more than common accuracy.

‘And who is that lady,’ said my friend, ‘so young and beautiful, and yet clothed in mourning?’

‘That is the wife of Don Roderigo a noted libertine,’ said the man. ‘He has been married to her about seven days, gratified his desires, picked her pocket, and has now discarded her, upon the unfounded charge of incontinence.’

“You may guess my astonishment, when I heard this barbarous accusation against my brother. But I knew him to be capable of executing any vicious project, if it appeared likely to benefit his finances. The scorn-

ful reproaches of mankind made no impressions on a mind like his, incapable of reflection, and a heart steeled against the dictates of honour and humanity.

“The curtain, at last, drew up, and indeed it was a lucky circumstance, for we found our acquaintance a most impertinent, loquacious fellow.

“We sat the play through, and then retired to our hotel. In the morning, the Chevalier Rináñez, for that was my friend’s name, received letters of importance, that recalled him, instantly, to Portugal, and for which kingdom we set out post the same evening. On our arrival in the city of Lisbon, I was introduced by the Chevalier, as his intimate friend and acquaintance, to the family where he resided. They received me with distinguished politeness, and a few weeks after I had been there, a young Spanish lady, accomplished and beautiful, paid me particular attention. She was an orphan, and possessed of considerable property in the province of Old Castile.

Her insinuating manners, together with her personal beauty, failed not to force from me, in secret, the severest pangs of a growing passion. We frequently met, as by accident, in the solitary walks of the garden; and one evening, as we admired the beautiful scenery which surrounded us, a burst of passion overpowered the doubts we had hitherto mutually entertained of each other's affections; and, as the passing clouds dimmed the lustre of the moon, we sealed the bond of love with a thousand hallowed kisses. She then told me, the chevalier, my friend, was her guardian, and in possession of her property. We were about to converse on this subject in a small romantic temple, which was situated in the most secluded part of the shrubbery, when Rinandez entered the place: his cloak thrown carelessly over his right shoulder, his sword under his arm, and his hat upon his brows; he darted a furious look at me, and then told me, with a menacing frown, that I had better leave Lisbon, without delay.

‘Otherwise,’ said he ‘miscreant, you shall
 ‘feel the most severe punishment, daring, as
 ‘you have done, to wean this lady from her
 ‘faith, by advising her to adopt a system of
 ‘heretical opinions. What can you expect
 ‘from the powerful authority that guards,
 ‘with a jealous eye, the beloved institution
 ‘of our catholic religion? What can you
 ‘expect,—villain?’

“I was struck with the most profound
 astonishment, and, indignant at the manner
 in which he delivered his sentiments, began
 to remonstrate, rather severely, against so
 unprincipled and ill-founded a charge. I
 endeavoured to explain the matter, but in
 vain; he rushed from the temple, and ex-
 claimed, as he left us—

‘You will repent your hypocrisy.’

‘My God!’ said Laurentina, ‘what is
 ‘to become of us?’

“No time was to be lost. I persuaded her
 not to return to the house, but to quit the
 garden, by a wicket that led into the public
 street; and, proceeding immediately to the

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Spanish ambassador's house, related to him a faithful account of the whole circumstance, and begged his excellency's protection and interference. He appeared sensible of my innocence; for, having a perfect knowledge of the hasty tempers of the Portuguese, he naturally concluded that the chevalier had been led away by passion. He desired us to remain in his house whilst he sent for Rinandez, and discussed the subject with him. After some time, he made his appearance, and the whole affair was argued before the ambassador: he was completely in my favour, and the chevalier was dismissed with ignominy. The next morning we were married; and, the affair being buzzed about the city, a letter was dropped at the door of the hotel where we resided, directed for me: on opening it, the contents were as follows;

‘ BROTHER SPANIARD,

‘ The Chevalier Rinandez is a villain.
 ‘ The lady's property is in his hands; and,
 ‘ without you make application to the Spa-

'nish ambassador, to have it restored, all
 ' efforts will be in vain. A monk, by name
 ' father Anthony, a mischievous, deceitful
 ' villain, of the order of St. Benedict, is con-
 ' cerned with him. If you should want any
 ' evidence to corroborate this, proclaim the
 ' receipt of the letter in the market-place; I
 ' shall be at hand: but, without that, you
 ' will never hear of me more. Farewel.'

'A SPANISH VICTIM

'TO THE CHEVALIER'S CRUELTY.'

"This letter surprised me beyond con-
 ception: but, the mode it pointed out, for
 the recovery of the property, was so judi-
 cious, that I did not hesitate a moment, to
 comply with the injunction, and carried it
 to the ambassador. He read it over with
 astonishment, and, taking me with him to
 the prime minister, influenced him in my
 favour. He immediately sent an order to
 an officer of the Inquisition to seize Father
 Anthony, the monk in league with the
 chevalier. This fiat was punctually exe-
 cuted, and the trembling friar brought be-

fore his excellency. After a few questions had been put to him, he discovered the whole of the chevalier's villany, and also the place of his retreat. Officers were sent after him; but he had gained intelligence of Father Anthony's arrest, and had fled the city. He left a trunk directed for me, if I should be heard of in two months; and which was brought by the officers to the palace of the minister. On its being opened, the writings of my wife's estate in Castile were found, a large bag of pistoles, and a golden hilted dagger, with this laconic note—

'Take your right, fair lady! The pistoles
'will carry you to Spain, and the dagger
'will serve Angelo in time of danger. He
'will soon be rewarded, for the trouble he
'has taken to ruin you, and disgrace me.'

'R.'

"This threat had very little effect upon my spirits. The idea of being in possession of my wife's property sufficiently consoled me, and chased away every unpleasant anti-

cipation that arose in my mind, in consequence of this letter. After returning my grateful acknowledgments for the civility shewn me by the ambassador, I went to my lodgings, and shewed my wife the contents of the trunk; who was overjoyed to a degree, at finding me in possession of so valuable and unexpected a repository. I shall digress a little from my own history, and relate how this chevalier became guardian to *Laurentina*. He had been upon sincere terms of intimacy with her father, who died very rich at his castle, in the province of Old Castile, whilst the chevalier was on a visit to him. The old gentleman, on his death bed, recommended the care of his beloved daughter to the Chevalier de *Rinandez*, who faithfully promised to be her friend and protector through life. Dazzled with the idea of being the guardian of so inestimable a treasure, he wrote a letter, from *Madrid*, to his friend *Father Anthony*, who recommended him to *Father Jerome*, a friar of the order of *St.*

Dominic, in that city, for advice. He waited upon him, and, after shewing him the letter of Father Anthony, related an account of his good fortune, and expressing also his intention of making the orphan Laurentina his wife.

“The subtle friar conceived this to be an injudicious plan to obtain his ends, and advised him to place Laurentina in a convent in Portugal, pay the abbess a good round sum for her maintenance, and enjoy the remaining part of the property, free and unincumbered. This iniquitous proposal elated the abandoned Rinandez beyond conception; and, repairing to the castle, he sent Laurentina, under the protection of a faithful servant, to Lisbon, and ordered him to lodge her in the house of Donna Melinda, an old procuress of his acquaintance, until his arrival. As Rinandez was one evening crossing the street in which he lodged, a man seized him by the collar, and carried him to prison. The friar, alarmed for his friend's safety, procured (through

his Inquisitorial interest) his release; but no person, not even Rinandez himself, ever knew the cause of his arrest and confinement. This accident procured me his friendship, and the consequent adventures you are in possession of.

“My wife now insisted upon leaving Lisbon for her native country. The family castle being now in my possession, I determined to reside there, and dispatched domestics to prepare it for our reception, as it had not been inhabited by any person but a poor farmer and his family, since her father’s death. We arrived at the castle, after an agreeable journey, early in the evening of a very fine summer’s day. The approach to it was through a valley, surrounded by the wild scenery of nature: a venerable ruin, as we passed it, silvered with age, threw me into an enthusiastic rapture; and, naturally fond of romantic edifices, I saw the departing beams of the sun reflected by the glittering vanes upon the towers, with more than common admira-

tion. As the great gate opened to receive us, the old hoary porter added to the beauty of the castle: we were welcomed with a profusion of low bows and congratulations, and a good fire blazed in the hall, to comfort us, as we regaled ourselves upon the dainties set before us by the peasant. My life now became the scene of unbounded pleasure. Laurentina, with that unaccountable delight with which the mind is often impressed, on revisiting scenes where the days of childhood glided away in the enjoyment of unrestrained felicity, wept, as she seated herself in the room appropriated by her mother for her education; and passed the hours of evening in visiting the galleries and chambers of the castle, and, pointing out to me, as we wandered through the beautiful vistas of the garden, the particular spot that her mother frequented.

“When, thro’ the tall trees’ foliage in the wave,
The light of many stars reflected shone;
And lonely Philomel, with plaintive song,
Cheer’d the wild paths of Solitude.”

“Three years were spent in uninterrupted bliss; and a beautiful boy was the fruit of our mutual loves. One night, when the family had retired to rest, I was alarmed by a loud knocking at the outer gate of the castle: I rose, and dressed myself; and, as I was descending the great staircase, the porter rapped at the hall door, and informed me that three or four travellers were at the gate, and amongst them, he said, was my brother. This circumstance greatly astonished me, for I had heard nothing of him since we separated at Madrid, previous to my departure for Lisbon with the chevalier. I accompanied the porter to the tower window, and by the light of my lamp discovered my brother, mounted on horseback, and attended by three or four domestics armed, and two other persons. On seeing Roderigo, I ordered the gate to be unbarred, and admitted them into the courtyard. Although the treatment I had received from him rather merited my reproach and scorn, yet, conscious of the in-

fallibility of human nature, I received him with all the ardour of friendship, and a friar, who accompanied him, with respectful civility. He made a thousand apologies, for not paying me a visit before, but said in excuse, that he had been to the settlements in Hispaniola, upon important business for the state, and had not returned to Madrid above two months. I knew he was connected with a party of vicious young noblemen, who hovered about the court; and, therefore, did not doubt the truth of his story. After they had refreshed themselves upon some cold venison, and the best wine in my cellar, lamps were provided for them, and each was shewn into his apartment for the night. In the morning I introduced Laurentina to my brother, and his friend, the friar. We passed several days in great conviviality and friendship, and the night preceding the day fixed for my brother's return to the capital, as we were at supper, Laurentina, after tasting some wine in a goblet, presented to her by one of the

monk's servants, suddenly shrieked aloud, and, falling back in her chair, apparently expired in strong convulsions. Every effort to recover her was ineffectual; and she was carried a corpse to the cedar chamber. It is impossible for me to describe my situation of mind. I raved about the castle in a state of disconsolate fury, wept every hour over the body of my unfortunate wife, and pressed my lips to her's, cold with the icy touch of death, in a state of melancholy distraction. My brother endeavoured to console me with his accursed ideas of religion, and the monk continually exhorted me to patience, and obedience to my Maker's authority. About the hour of midnight I rose from my bed, and, entering the chamber where the body was deposited, seated myself in a chair by the bed side, to indulge my sorrows uninterrupted. In the act of contemplating a picture of Laurentina, when a child, which was placed over the chimney-piece, I heard, with some emotion, a voice, exclaim—

“God Almighty! where am I?”

“There was an awful pause for some minutes; during which time I looked upon my situation with the deepest horror.

“My trembling limbs could scarce support me; for every sound, which disturbed the silence of the night, pierced me to the very soul. I was retiring from the room, wrapt in the gloom of conjecture and distress, when something flapped against the window, and, as I turned my head to discover the cause, I beheld a hand, feebly endeavouring to draw back the curtain of the bed; my lamp dropt upon the floor, and, rushing from the chamber, I fled with the greatest precipitation to my brother's room, where I found Roderigo, and the monk, in deep consultation. They started with confusion and surprise, when I entered the apartment, breathless, and, as you may conceive, my countenance distorted with horror. I related my story, as well as I could, and saw them look at each other with significant frowns; but they at length

endeavoured to ascribe my feelings to the dreams of a bewildered imagination. As I stood shuddering by the side of my brother's chair, expecting to see the spirit enter, the hall echoed with loud and piercing shrieks. They fled instantly, with the lamp, to the spot, and the apparent spectre of *Laurentina* presented itself before them. The monk made his escape; but, as my brother passed her, she caught hold of his cloak, and, throwing herself on her knees, begged of him, in the most endearing manner, not to leave her to perish. The horror, this circumstance occasioned, almost deprived him of his senses: he called aloud for help; no one appeared: he attempted to disengage himself; but she resisted his efforts with impassioned prayers. He groaned with horror, and was on the point of falling senseless on the ground, when she called him by his name, and wept. Her tone of voice, her manner, her steady adherence to her first request, and the colour that now spread itself over her palid countenance, encou-

raged him to conquer his fears, and satisfy himself as to the reality of Laurentina. He put a question to her. She answered it, with earnest inquiries for me and her child. He called aloud for the servants; but the dreadful idea of meeting the spirit of Laurentina had caused them all precipitately to fly from the castle. Although I was witness to the whole transaction, I could not recover myself sufficiently, as to assist him; but on hearing his voice a second time, I entered the hall, and was instantly encircled in the cold arms of Laurentina. My situation can more easily be conceived than described. The form of my beloved wife, wrapped in its shroud; her face, so often the subject of delightful contemplation, pale, and bandaged with the fillet of death, struck me with incredible horror: I pressed her to my bosom; the quick palpitation of the heart convinced me that she lived.

'I am cold and weary,' she exclaimed; 'let me retire to bed.'

"The servants had by this time returned

to the castle, and she was immediately put into a warm bed, and several balsamic medicines administered. She soon fell into a tranquil sleep, and I left her under the care of an old domestic, and went down to my brother and the friar, who, I was told, were in the garden parlour. On entering the room, I discovered, with astonishment, one of his servants lying on the ground, weltering in his blood. He waved his hand for me to approach him, when he spoke in the following terms :

‘In me you discover the wretch who attempted to poison Laurentina. It was by the order of Rinandez, who personates the monk. Beware of his villany! If I had succeeded, you was to have been dispatched to night. Your brother is, by profession, a robber, and connected with a desperate gang of villains that infest the neighbouring forests. They will arrive here, in an hour, by appointment. Rinandez has stabbed me, in his anger, for failing in the execution of the deed.—Oh God!’

“The ruffian turned upon his side and expired. I rushed from the room to Laurentina’s apartment, and I entered the chamber with impatient distress. I discovered the monk, coming from the bed side, with a poniard crimsoned with blood, in his right hand. On seeing me in the room, he drew back the curtains, and beheld my unfortunate wife in the agonies of death, from two stabs she had received in her right breast. He darted a furious look at me, and stripping off his habit—

‘Behold!’ said he, ‘the man whom you, whilst basking in the sunshine of his friendship, disgraced and ruined; but the hour of retribution is arrived.’

“As he exultingly stretched forth his hand, which grasped the dagger, still reeking with the blood of innocence, I seized him by the throat, and dashed him on the ground. The violence of the fall enabled me to wrest the poniard from his hand, and, as he poured forth his blasphemous execrations, I plunged it deep into his heart. The awful time of

night, and the death-like stillness which reigned in the chamber, impressed me, as I stood between the bodies, with feelings never to be described; but, when I turned, and beheld *Laurentina*, a beautiful victim to the resentment of a barbarous villain, I stamped upon the body of *Rinandez*, and repeatedly stabbed it, amidst the wild ravings of despair. Unconscious of my perilous situation, I stretched myself upon the bed, in the agony of grief, by the side of *Laurentina's* bleeding corpse; at that moment the alarm was rung with great violence. Under an idea that my servants were coming to assist me, I rushed into the gallery, and, Oh God! saw, with the deepest anguish, my helpless child, hurried, by two ruffians, through the hall into the court-yard. Concluding they were his murderers, I raised the poniard to my heart, and, as I was about to end my miserable existence, the blaze of torches burst through the gothic windows in the hall. In an instant I saw my brother rush in at the fold-

ing doors, with a naked sword in his hand, followed by five or six ruffians—

‘Rinandez,’ he cried, ‘and some of our fellows have dispatched the domestics. Angelo is our prey: he must be found, ere I can call the castle mine.’

“My desperate situation gave fresh vigour to my almost expiring senses. I hastily returned to the bloody chamber, and wrapping the body of Laurentina in the monkish habit of Rinandez, took it in my arms, and fled down a private staircase into the subterraneous passage which led to a pile of ruins at no great distance from the castle, and from which I penetrated by a private pathway, to a wild recess in the neighbouring mountains.

“Here, as the moon shone through the branches of the shrubs that grew upon the rock, I knelt by the body of my wife, and devoted many hours to prayer; and when morning broke, I sought out the most private cavern in the rock, and secreted myself in it, until the approach of evening,

when stripping off the bloody robe, I buried the body of *Laurentina* in a dell, where the earliest flowers of spring grow, in the most beautiful and wild luxuriance. The habit of *Rinandez* served me as a disguise, and I passed into this province as a wandering and distressed friar, determined to end my days in the gloom of solitude. I was cheerfully admitted into a convent of the *Fratres Misericordiæ*, and have been ever since supported by the order. My melancholy turn of mind became the subject of their surprise and compassion; and to free myself from any inquiries, which might tend to discover the cause of my sorrow, I requested permission to retire into this solitude, and to attend daily at the monastery for devotion and sustenance. My request was instantly gratified, and many long tedious years have I lived, secluded from society, in this remote and unfrequented place. My affliction has been, in some measure, solaced by the idea that a just God will, one day, avenge my calamities, and, in his

mercy, pardon the murder of Rinandez, for no slumber seals the eye of Providence. Every year, on the eve of the Nativity, have I made a pilgrimage to the secret tomb, where the body of my beloved wife mouldered in the unhallowed dell, and brought back as many bones as I could conceal. In a sepulchre, amongst the ruins of this abbey, I discovered a coffin entire, and moving it into this part of the building, deposited in it, the bloody garment, the bones of Laurentina, and the dagger, with which I dispatched the villain Rinandez."

He rose from his seat, and, pointing to the coffin—

"Yonder," he continued, "is the monument of my heart-rending misfortunes. Nightly, by the side of that awful spectacle, I pray for the repose of Laurentina's spirit, and make it my pillow, when, fatigued with watching, I drop into broken slumbers. When I last visited the tomb, I approached near the castle, to take a last farewell of a residence once the seat of uninter-

rupted happiness and connubial bliss, but found it reduced to ashes, by fire, and the spot totally deserted. My meditations, as I gazed upon the ruins, were those of a philosopher taught in the school of misfortune, how little must be expected from gratifying the intemperate calls of ambition, and how vain the boast of one moment's happiness."

"Merciful God!" cried Alexo, "do I find in this miserable habitation, and cloathed with this wretched apparel, a father?"

Exclamations of horror and surprise burst from the other travellers. Whilst Alexo, almost insensible with rapture and astonishment, fell at the feet of Don Angelo, and bathed, with his tears, the hand of his disconsolate and unfortunate father. Alexo recollected, with horror, the bloody chamber they entered, when in search of Cle-anthe, little suspecting, at the time he was surveying it, that it had flowed from the body of his murdered mother. He approached the coffin—

“And are these the remains of the unfortunate *Laurentina*?” he exclaimed, with an affectionate sigh.

Although torn from her at an early age, the faint recollection of her endearing sympathy for him when a child, united with the tenderest feelings for her fate, caused him to feel the most acute sensations of distress. His father, who had now recovered from the unexpected shock his senses had sustained by the discovery of his son, came to him, and, with tender admonitions, persuaded him to leave the coffin.

“You have seen, my father,” said *Alexo*, but one instance of my uncle’s cruelty; I have been witness to many; for he was advised to acts of villany, by that fiend of hell, the friar of *St. Dominic*.”

Alexo now repeated to his father every incident that had happened to him, since he arrived at the age, when the mind is capable, by reflection, of feeling the severities of misfortune.

“My uncle,” said he, “has, by this time,

expiated his crimes upon the scaffold. His daring robberies, and cruel treatment to the unhappy sufferers that fell into his power, have, at last, deprived the libertine of existence. He restored to me, previous to his condemnation, the writings belonging to an estate in Estremadura. I am now going to Arragon, to reside with this lady, to whom I am now espoused, upon the family estate of Don Alphonso, her father."

Alexo then questioned Angelo, how Roderigo became possessed of the title to an estate in Estremadura, and the reason why he did not revenge his unnatural cruelties, by an application to the officers of justice, for apprehending Roderigo, and bringing him to trial?

"The deeds he gave you," said he, "belong to his own property, gained by his villany. Too well aware, that father Jerome was his adviser in the business, I was confident that his influence in the Inquisition would have effectually prevailed over truth and justice, and that I should have

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fell a victim to my own temerity, if I had made application for his arrest. I therefore was determined to seek out a solitude, where I might spend the remainder of my days in reflection and tranquillity; and, if an opportunity never offered to be revenged upon him, to die in obscurity."

The party were alarmed at an unusual noise, behind a mouldering pedestal, some little distance from where the coffin stood; but, on searching the spot, they discovered it was poor Grado, fast asleep, and snoring insufferably loud.

The near approach of morn was announced by a clock in the neighbouring convent; and the party, after a little refreshing sleep, roused Grado from his hallowed repository, to prepare the beasts and carriage for the journey. Don Angelo was, with great difficulty, persuaded to leave his favourite melancholy haunt, and retire with his son to the chateau, at some distance, in the province: but, before he complied with the request, he begged that Alexo

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would accompany him to the spot, where he intended to deposit *Laurentina's* remains. They bore the coffin, on their shoulders, to a monument, situated in a retired and gloomy part of the ruin. An undulating stream, which flowed near it, refreshed the profusion of violets that grew beside its course; the tall cypress sheltered the silent walk from observation; and the mournful gloom of the surrounding scenery realized, in effect, the beautiful exclamation of an inimitable author.

“Oh! bear me, then, to vast embowering shades,
To twilight groves, and visionary vales;
To weeping grottoes, and prophetic gloom,
Where angel forms athwart the solemn dusk
Tremendous sweep, or seem to sweep along,
And voices, more than human, through the void
Deep sounding, seize th’ enthusiastic ear.”

Angelo, after rolling away some mossy fragments from the entrance of the sepulchre, deposited in it the coffin with its contents, and fixed the following inscription over it:

In this coffin
 rest the mouldering bones of
 LAURENTINA,
 a native of Old Castile,
 and wife of DON ANGELO:
 She was murdered, at the instigation of Don Roderigo,
 her brother in law,
 by Iago Rinandez, a cruel assassin.
 To these solitudes
 the unfortunate husband fled for safety,
 and from
 the powers of the INQUISITION,
 and wasted many years in melancholy reflection.

They carefully closed the entrance, and
 retired. The morning had now brightened
 the east with a beautiful variety of tints,
 and the air, as they passed through the
 grove of cypress, was enriched with the
 fragrance of the dewy flowers that bloomed
 beside the pathway. Alexo listened, with
 enthusiastic delight, to the parting song of
 the nightingales, and the morning hymn of
 the monks, as it swelled, faintly, at inter-
 vals, along the valley. When they had
 reached the habitation amongst the ruins,

they found every thing in readiness for their departure. Don Angelo, after diminishing his beard, wrapped himself in Alexo's cloak, and became quite spruce for a travelling companion. He only took with him his books, leaving his cell, ready furnished, for the next unfortunate anchorite who might secrete himself in the ruins.

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CHAPTER X.

"Thou knowest how guiltless first I met thy flame,
 When love approached me under friendship's name;
 My fancy formed thee of angelic kind,
 Some emanation of th' all beauteous mind."

POPE.

IN the enjoyment of a season of happiness, we sometimes forget that life is surrounded by events, hid in the womb of time, that may one day infallibly destroy our comfort. The Marchioness of Meridas looked not for the morrow, and appeared a stranger to anticipation or reflection.—Don Castello, a cavalier of inferior fortune, but a friend of the marquis, was introduced into the castle, and resided there as one of the family. On a sudden, his natural vivacity forsook him, and he became fond of retirement, thoughtful, and dejected. This unaccountable change

in his disposition appeared to create a great degree of alarm in the mind of the marquis; for he was constantly seen walking with him, in the grounds about the castle, apparently in deep and earnest conversation, and usually passed the greater part of the night in Castellio's chamber. The marquis was suddenly called to Madrid upon important business; and, one evening, as the marchioness was sitting alone in her library, Don Castellio unexpectedly entered the apartment. He presented her with some flowers; and, after the usual expressions of politeness had passed between them, and some unimportant observations upon the weather, a mutual silence for some minutes ensued. Castellio at length drew a letter from his pocket, and, delivering it to the marchioness, precipitately quitted the room: she received it with surprise, and, opening it, read, with the greatest astonishment, the following words:

“It is in vain that I endeavour to endure my sorrows in retirement, when the cause of

my distress continues so near to me. Oh! that it were possible for me to forget her! My friendship for Meridas dictates to me the necessity of such a resolution; but I am unable to accomplish it. I respect him, I revere him; but, (diabolical thought) cannot resist the cruel desire of sacrificing his happiness to the completion of mine. What an idea! You start and shudder at the sentence. But forgive me, my adored Florella, forgive me, when I declare that I love you to distraction."

At this moment, the consciousness of her inability to resist the threats of Castellio, if, in the fury of his misguided and dishonourable passion, he should endeavour to accomplish by stratagem and force, what he could not in any way effect by persuasion and flattery, struck her with the most forcible degree of horror. She ordered her servant to sleep in her chamber that night; and, the next morning, addressed the following note to Castellio:

"I will not listen to the avowal of a pas-

fion that I hold dishonourable and impious. Forget me, and let this affair sink in oblivion."

He read it with the severest pangs of disappointment. His affection, as by magic, was changed to disgust and hatred. But as, in the height of sorrow, he meditated upon revenge, she crossed the great walk in the garden. The fiends of resentment immediately forsook him, fleeing, as it were, before an increased influence of his passion. He followed her hastily through a solitude in the garden, and discovered that she entered a romantic tower near the canal.

"Why," he exclaimed, "should I suffer myself to be the dupe of misguided principles? Are the laws of friendship so sacred, as to be revered in opposition to the finer feelings of the soul. Oh, no!" She must, she shall consent."

The door was open, and, entering the apartment with a cautious step, he had seated himself by her side, ere she perceived him.

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“My God!” she exclaimed, “as she hastily rose from her seat, is it Castellio?”

“It is Castellio; and it is the man who adores you. It is he who means to sacrifice his life at your feet, if you resist his desires.”

He took her by the hand, and was going to press it to his lips, when she forcibly disengaged it, and exclaimed, in a tone of indignant resentment—

“Villain, forbear! Recollect yourself. Are you not the friend of my husband?”

“I do confess it. To him I own I am indebted for many trivial favours; but to me he owes his existence. If you love him, you will preserve his life, by dividing your affection. There is a secret, which, if told abroad, would doom him to instant death. I am in possession of it. He is not the Marquis de la Meridas, but—”

At this moment the door was burst open, and the marquis stood before them. He looked upon Castellio with an angry frown, and, taking his wife by the hand, conducted her, almost speechless with horror, to

the castle. He there interrogated her, with severity, respecting the conversation he had overheard, and insisted upon her disclosing to him every circumstance that had happened to her since his absence. She delivered to him Castellio's letter, and her answer. A sudden contraction of his brows, together with the paleness which overspread his countenance, were sufficient indications of his feelings. She trembled for the consequences.

"I shall return," said he, imperiously, "to the castle, about sun set."

The marchioness now, for the first time, experienced the most acute sensations of distrust and alarm; the mysterious language of Castellio, the thoughtful appearance of the marquis, together with the secret conferences which she had observed them hold, in unfrequented avenues, convinced her, that some matters of importance must soon, inevitably, be discovered. As she sat, pensively, at her chamber window, which looked into the garden, she

observed Castellio, wrapt in his cloak, and wandering, as if melancholy, along the borders of a rivulet, which flowed near a vista to the canal. As he approached the castle, she heard him say with emphasis—

“ He will not long interrupt me in the attainment of my wishes : the murder shall be disclosed.”

At the word, murder, she almost sunk upon the floor.

“ This mystery,” she exclaimed, “ cannot be long concealed.”

She had scarce uttered the sentence, when the marquis entered the chamber. Immediately she related to him, with unaffected concern, what had happened. Her artless questions drew from him the sign of guilt. He turned abruptly from her, and, apparently forgetful of his situation, paced up and down the room, as one wild with distress, uttering, at intervals, deep sighs, and exclamations, of—“ Oh God! the villain! I wish I was in my grave !

He desired to be alone that night, and,

early in the evening, retired to rest. About midnight he arose, and, arming himself with his sword, quitted his chamber, and proceeded to a gloomy solitude in the grounds of the castle. He there met Castellio by appointment.

“Castellio,” he exclaimed, as he approached him, “is a villain. My confederate and supposed friend, to play the hypocrite, is what I never expected. And why this sudden revolution in his character? Can I not account for it? Oh, yes! It is but too true, that the adored object of my heart is the talisman which draws forth his damning accusation. But she is proof against the charm. Castellio will find her firmer than Lucretia in the support of chastity. Could he find no other method to bring down the severest penalties of justice on his friend, or to alienate the affections of his wife, than by disclosing to the world the murder of the marquis? Castellio has debased the character of a man, by such a thought; and, by threatening to

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publish it to the world, proved himself an inconsiderate and worthless scoundrel; for he was present at the deed, and assisted in the execution of it."

"I did so; and acknowledge the justice of your reproaches. But have I shared, equally, with you, the reward of our iniquity? Had I not a right to expect a joint distribution of the property we acquired by such an act?"

"Vile dissembler!" cried the marquis, as he drew the letter from his pocket, "dare you disavow the real and hellish motives which urged you on to betray me, when I hold such an infallible and damning proof of it in my hand? But mark me, Castellio, from this hour I cancel the bond of our friendship; and, so far from fearing your hellish designs, I dare you to the worst. Villain, I do. Beware of my revenge."

He hastily quitted the solitude, and retired to the castle. Early in the morning two men rapped at the great gate, and inquired for the marquis. They were ad-

mitted into his chamber, and held a private conference with him for some time. After the departure of the men, he visited the marchioness, and found her in a state of gloomy melancholy. Suspecting the cause to arise from the interruption he had given to the declarations of Castellio, in a moment the horrid fiend of jealousy took possession of his mind; and, grasping her by the hand, hurried her to the South Tower, and confined her in a room that had not been inhabited for many years.

“Your gallant, your adored Castellio, shall soon be with you,” he exclaimed, as he led her into the chamber, with a supercilious smile.

In vain did she protest her innocence before the face of heaven; in vain did she resist his efforts to leave her, with the most piercing entreaties and tears: he thrust her indignantly from his side, and closed the door, in the violence of his brutal temper.

As the darkness of the chamber was faintly illuminated by the rays of the sun, which

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shone through a crevice in the decayed boards that barricaded up the window, objects continually glided before her eyes; and voices, as of people in extreme distress, seemed to echo along the apartment. Overpowered with the effect of these dreadful sensations, she sunk lifeless upon the floor. She recovered, alas! but to endure torments of the most horrid nature; for, as she burst into tears, a faint groan, uttered by some one in the apartment, pierced her to the very soul.

“Gracious God!” she exclaimed, “am I not alone?”

She listened attentively for some time, expecting by that means to discover from whence the noise proceeded; but a continued silence only ensued.

“I am innocent of any crime, she cried,” “that can rouse the sleeping dead from the grave. What, then, have I to fear?”

She fancied she heard footsteps ascending the stairs in the tower; and, in exploring her way to the door, to call for assistance,

the groan was repeated. She remained for some time fixed to the spot, with sensations almost bordering upon distraction: at length a voice exclaimed,

“ Oh, Florella! pardon me, forgive the injuries you have suffered from the hands of your dying husband.”

At this word she rent the room with loud and dreadful shrieks, and sunk upon the body in a state of insensibility. Alarmed by her cries, the domestics of the castle ran instantly to Castellio's chamber, and communicated the circumstance to him. He commanded them to follow him. They entered the tower with some degree of courage; but when they heard the groans of Gazala (the real name of the marquis), in a moment the room was deserted by all but Castellio. He proceeded to the chamber, and, on opening the door, found the miserable Florella bending over the body of her husband. He seized her by the arm, and was dragging her from the tower, when he heard old Rigo, the vociferous gar-

dener, and most courageous of the whole household, ascending the stairs, and condemning the dastardly behaviour of his fellow servants in vehement language.

Castellio escaped, by rushing upon him as he entered the room, and extinguishing his lamp. The fellow, however, followed him through the gallery; but, unable to come up with him, returned to the kitchen, and, relating the circumstance to his fellow servants, desired them to accompany him with lights. They instantly complied with his request, and, on opening the door of the tower, with great astonishment discovered their lady weeping by the side of Gazala, who was weltering in his blood.

He was immediately removed to his chamber, and a surgeon sent for, to examine his wounds, He pronounced them mortal, and advised him to be attended by a confessor. A father, from a convent of white penitents in the neighbourhood, was sent for; who, being left alone with him, heard,

with the utmost astonishment, the following declaration.

“ I lived for some years in the capacity of confidential servant to the Marquis de la Meridas, who resided at Strasburgh in Germany. His behaviour to me was more like a father than a master; and, upon his accession to his castle and the property of the Asturas family, he appointed me chief superintendant of his affairs. I by that means became possessed of his papers, and from them learned that his brother was confined in the bastille at Paris, for some trivial offence, and that his relations lived at the extremity of Andalusia. As we travelled through Germany, on our way to Spain, Castellio, a favorite footman of the marquis's, concerted a plan whereby we might possess ourselves, for some time, of the marquis's estates. He communicated his designs to me, and I readily acceded to the proposal. We frequently travelled through forests during the night for dispatch; and,

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as we rode along the pathway of one of these dreadful solitudes, I suddenly called out to the marquis to stop, pretending that his horse's shoe was loose.

“He immediately dismounted, and that instant we seized him by the throat, and strangled him with a whip. This mode of perpetrating the deed was adopted to prevent the clothes being stained with blood; for I was obliged to dress myself in his apparel, to personate him with success. After throwing the body into a pit almost filled with stagnated water, we rode furiously through the forest, and travelled with the greatest expedition until we arrived at the castle.

“As the marquis had never been seen by any of the domestics, or the peasantry who lived upon the estate, I was welcomed with great joy and festivity. By a course of reflection, however, I became harassed with the enormity of my crime, and usually spent the greater part of the day in a round of dissipation, and every

night retired to rest in a state of intoxication, purposely to avoid the horrors of conscience. Unable to bear the load of guilt which continually oppressed me, I repaired frequently to Madrid, in order to avoid reflection; and, one day, as I was attending to a procession of nuns that passed through the chapel of the Augustine friars, the uncommon beauty of one of the vestals struck me with such forcible admiration, that I determined to hazard an intrigue with her. I waited the return of the procession, which was about dark; and, as it passed under the gloomy porch of the chapel, I contrived to slip into her hand a billet, which contained an avowal of my passion, promises to maintain her in magnificence and wealth, and signed myself the Marquis of Meridas. I pressed on to the gate of the convent, and, stationing myself by one of the towers, heard her whisper, as she passed me, "Go to the South wicket." I immediately flew to the place of rendezvous, and, after waiting

some considerable time, heard several persons near the door, apparently in earnest conversation; they soon, however, separated, and I waited with great impatience for the expected arrival of my Dulcinea; but no one appeared: at length, however, a billet was thrown over the wall; and, on opening it, I found it contained a severe censure upon my audacity, and begged I would not interrupt the meditations of a mind devoted to solitude, with the false professions of a dissolute passion, and licentious ideas. Chagrined in the extreme by this remonstrance, I returned to my lodging, and consulted with Castellio upon the step to be pursued. He recommended me to persevere, and procure, if possible, an interview. In conducting this plan, we used a variety of artifices without success; but one night, made desperate by long continued disappointments, I placed myself upon the wall of the garden, and observed a light glimmering through the windows of the chapel. Forgetful of so rash a proceeding, I descended into

the garden, and, tracing my way to the sanctuary, climbed up to one of the casements, and, with the greatest pleasure and astonishment, discovered the adored object of my love, trimming a lamp at a small sepulchre under the window. Enraptured by this fortunate circumstance, I was about to enter the chapel, when she left the place, and, with a lighted taper, proceeded down a solitary walk in the garden. I overtook her, and, extinguishing the light, declared myself to be the person who had addressed the billet to her; that my love was honourable, and, if an application to the abbess would not have any effect, I would procure a dispensation from the pope to release her from her religious obligations. Fear almost overpowered her senses."

"The time of prayer," said she, "is nearly arrived, and, if I am discovered, inevitable destruction will be the consequence: permit me to return to the convent now, and I promise to meet you by the South Tower, to morrow night at twelve.

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I embraced her; she struggled with apparent reluctance: but when my lips met hers, she pressed my hand with sympathetic ardour, and, wishing me a good night, fled to her cell. I immediately gained the wall, and, descending into the street, retired hastily to my lodging, and related the whole adventure to Castellio. The next night I was loitering near the monastery some time before the clock struck twelve, and passed away the time in listening to a band of Serenaders who were passing under the convent walls. When the long expected hour arrived, I ascended the wall, and in a few moments witnessed the appearance of my beloved Florella. St. Anna, at that moment, rushed between us with a drawn dagger.

“St. Anna!” uttered the friar, with a deep sigh.

“You know her, then, father?” continued the penitent. “She is the mother of my wife.”

“Merciful God!” he cried, as he sunk

back in his chair, “ is the beauteous Florella the wife of a murderer?”

“ Gazala remained silent for some time, when the monk, who had recovered from his surprise, desired him to proceed.

“ I imposed myself upon the abbess for the Marquis of Meridas, by means of forged letters from Don John De Modena, brother to the lady Asturias, I could plainly perceive that these testimonials had great weight with her; and, pushing on my suit with all the eloquence I was master of, at last obtained her consent to marry her daughter, and the nuptials were celebrated privately at midnight in the chapel belonging to her own convent. The innocence and beauty of my wife soon changed a lawless passion to sincere affection, and we lived in uninterrupted happiness until Castellio became enamoured with her charms, and, to eradicate her regard for me, threatened to disclose to her the murder of the marquis. I reproved him for his villany, and, resolving to be revenged upon so perfidious a

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wretch, hired two assassins to murder him, at midnight, in his bed ; but they, in expectation of receiving another reward from him, disclosed the secret ; and in the evening, as I wandered in one of the avenues, they came in company with Castellio, and, stabbing me in several places, left me for dead in the walk. I laid for some time bleeding on the ground, when the ruffians returned, and, taking me in their arms, carried me to what is called the Haunted Chamber in the South Tower, and threw me, with great violence, on the floor. I had, in a fit of jealousy, confined my wife in that chamber. It was a barbarous and inhuman proceeding, but proved a most fortunate circumstance ; for, on hearing my groans, she drew the servants to the tower by violent shrieks. The villain, Castellio, accompanied them ; and, seeing her by my side, he rushed upon her, and was dragging her from the chamber, when the gardener appeared, and prevented him. He has fled the castle, but may yet be lurking about the grounds ; and

to your paternal care I recommend my beloved Florella."

During the conclusion of Gazala's confession, the friar was wrapt in thought; but, when the name of Florella was mentioned, he burst into a flood of tears, and, turning almost frantic to Gazala,

"You have committed," said he, "unpardonable crimes. The comfort I can bestow upon you, through the means of religion, will be small indeed; but it shall be administered."

After he had given him absolution, Gazala inquired particularly for Florella, and begged to see her.

The friar trembled, and persuaded him to the contrary. He rang his bell, however, with great violence; and, after a few minutes had elapsed in perfect silence, the sound of footsteps echoed along the gallery.

The friar hastily quitted his seat, and was proceeding to the door, when it opened, and the disconsolate Florella entered the apartment. His face was instantly

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smothered in his cowl; and, passing by her with an agitated step, he gained the gallery, ere he recollected that he had left a book upon the table, with his name written at length in the title page. He returned to the chamber, when he heard Gazala speak as follows—

“ My life, Florella, is drawing towards a close, and to that holy friar I have recommended you for protection.”

She burst into tears.

“ I have been foully murdered by Castellio. I am not the real Marquis of Meridas, but practised that abominable artifice upon your mother, and forged letters from Don John De Modena, to induce her to consent to our union, as I discovered from her own declarations, that she had been treated by the Asturias family with more than common respect.”

He appeared at this moment to be fainting: the friar ran to the bed side; but he was struggling with the agonies of death. For some time he lay speechless, and appa-

rently in great torture; when, endeavouring to rise in his bed, he fell back upon his pillow, and expired in dreadful convulsions. The situation of Florella can better be conceived than described; for such is the character of the female sex, in many instances, that although they are oppressed with injuries, and treated more like slaves, than objects who are entitled to our protection and regard, they continue their attachments with unshaken fidelity: seeking, in the hour of distress, to meliorate, by attention and sympathy, the sufferings of their unwarrantable taskmasters, when neglect and contempt would, in such cases, deservedly be applied. She continued by the body of her husband until near midnight, when she retired to her chamber. It was the same which had been occupied by St. Anna, during her residence at the castle. She sunk upon her couch, and endeavoured to obtain a few hours repose. When she awoke, she found the night not far spent; the moon beams still glittered on the water,

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and a solemn silence reigned around the castle. She seated herself by the window, and, taking her lute, played a favourite little melancholy air, which her mother had taught her in the convent. When she had finished it, she observed the friar under the tower, listening with great attention to her lute; and, as he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon the window, she heard him say,

“ It was in that room I first beheld the beautiful and unfortunate St. Anna. What a dreadful gloom now seems to appear in every part of these solitary walks, once the delight of her ingenuous mind. Then it was, that I could boast the possession of a tranquil mind. And, long had I remained master of that invaluable treasure, but for the powerful influence of a vicious passion. Can I meditate in the solitudes without a tear? Can I witness, amidst the deep serenity of the night, objects that were once the care of St. Anna, now wild and neglected, without the heartfelt pangs of horror? How often have I listened to that

air, now played by her disconsolate child, with unwearied attention. That friendless unfortunate to be the wife of a villain, a murderer,—Oh, heavens!”

He burst into a flood of tears, and retired hastily down the avenue. Surprised at this singular speech, Florella rose from her seat, and paced up and down the chamber, wrapt, as it were, in the gloomy anticipation of impending misery. Her tears ceased to flow, and her eyes apparently, with the impulse of insanity, rolled wildly in her head. She stopped at intervals, and with deep sighs exclaimed—

“Did he not mention the name of my mother? and with such emphasis and sorrow,—Merciful God! It is impossible. Yes, it must be the dream of a bewildered brain.”

The morning dawned. She saw the friar quit his melancholy haunt, and enter the castle—

“Go,” said she, to her servant, “go, and request the friar to attend me; if he

knows my mother, he cannot refuse, in this distressing moment, to comfort and protect me."

In a few minutes he entered the apartment, with his face buried in his cowl.

"Behold," she cried, "an innocent victim to treachery, sinking beneath the weight of her misfortunes. Behold her placed in a situation, scarcely credible, without a friend to whom she can apply for advice or consolation. Oh! that my dear affectionate mother could be informed of my situation! In her bosom I should find an asylum from the perils that surrounded me. Yes, St. Anna would protect and comfort me."

"St. Anna!" exclaimed the monk, as he threw back his cowl, wild with distress, "I am your protector, your father."

"My father! great God! She started with violent emotion from her seat, and looked upon the pale and almost senseless friar, with marks of distrust and horror.

"Yes!" he continued, "before you

stands the depraved, and guilty Jerome. Forget those sacred ties by which we are connected, for I am unworthy of them, and look upon me only in the light of a friend."

Convulsive sighs burst from her heart, and, as he approached, to assist her, she swooned in his arms. When she recovered, fearful of being again the object of the friar's unnatural and licentious cruelties, she threw herself upon her knees before him.

"Your child requests you," she cried, "to respect the sacred obligations of a parent."

"Ah! that fatal illusion wounds me to the very soul. My child!—before my God, do I swear to protect you with a father's love!"

He pressed her to his bosom, and, for some time, mingled his tears with those of his unhappy and ill-fated daughter.

During the day he left her, to direct some necessary preparations respecting the interment of her husband's body; but in

the evening he visited her again, and continued with her until near midnight, when he retired to his chamber. Sleep fled his pillow; the agitation of his mind compelled him to seek comfort in devotion; and, stealing softly from his room, he sought out, in the solitudes in the garden, a small oratory, dedicated, by the lady Asturas, to midnight prayer. He had often, during his residence in the family, indulged his meditation in this consecrated spot; and, as the piercing familiarity, with which every object struck him, brought back to his imagination that delightful period, when his mind, untutored in the vicious artifice of impure ideas, was the seat of unbounded happiness; he wandered to the grotto where he first seduced St. Anna, and, taking a pencil from his pocket, wrote a letter to her, expressive of his sorrowful contrition. Early in the morning he ordered the grave to be dug in the small chapel that belonged to the castle, and then retired, to console his beloved Florella. The procession com-

menced at midnight. The glaring of the torches amongst the old forest trees bending to the wind, as they passed on to the grave; the solemn appearance of the bier, and the piercing sorrows of Florella, struck every one present with an awful sense of the ceremony. They had nearly reached the oratory, which was illuminated for the purpose, when several voices commanded them to stop, and rest the bier upon the ground. Confusion and terror were visible in their countenances; and, ere they had time to question each other concerning the cause of this alarm, four men, habited in long cloaks, approached the bier, and, throwing aside the paul, forced open the coffin, stripped the body of its shroud, and, thrusting it into a large sack, uttered the following words:

“The Holy Inquisition is our authority for this act.”

All now was horror and distress. The friar, regardless of every other circumstance that claimed his attention, ran in search of

his daughter, whom he found senseless on the ground, surrounded by the female part of the family. He took her in his arms, and fled with the greatest precipitation to the castle. On entering the hall, he found it filled with men, armed, and dressed in travelling habits. They readily gave him assistance, and entreated him to suffer them to call their master.

“Who has usurped,” cried the monk, “the dominion of this castle?”

At that moment, a tall man, in a rich dress, entered the hall, accompanied by a stranger of genteel appearance. He looked sternly at the monk, and questioned him concerning Florella, who had just recovered from her indisposition.

“She is the unfortunate wife of Gazala, the late possessor of this mansion,” said he.

“Ah! is it possible, that so lovely a creature should be the wife of that abandoned villain, the murderer of my brother?”

“Brother!”

“Yes, reverend father, before you stands

the brother of the ill-fated Marquis of Meridas. I have unexpectedly arrived in Spain, on being liberated from the Bastille, where I have been confined for many years for speaking contemptuously of an insignificant and worthless courtier. I hastened to congratulate my brother on his acquisitions; and as I stopped at a small inn, in the village of Briego, a man, whom I was positive I had seen before, accosted me by my name, and requested to be in private with me, for a few minutes. I consented; first promising not to interrupt him in his journey, in consequence of any thing he told me. He then related to me the horrid murder of my brother, and the situation of the villain who perpetrated the crime. I begged of him his name; but he refused to tell it. My servants watched him narrowly until midnight, when he suddenly disappeared. I returned to Madrid, and procured officers to seize the murderer, in order that he might expiate his crime upon the scaffold—”

Florella burst into tears. She was conducted to her chamber, and left, attended by a female servant, to seek some refreshment from repose. In the evening she was visited by her father, who told her that Don Volio, the brother of the murdered marquis, who had come to take possession of the castle, sympathising with her in her distresses, had promised to send her in his carriage, under an escort of four faithful domestics, to Madrid. Overjoyed at so unexpected, but pleasing an event, she begged that her journey might not be delayed, as the scenes around her served only to increase the melancholy reflection on her unhappy situation. The friar informed Don Volio of her request; and, early in the morning of the next day, the carriage was in readiness at the gate of the castle. After collecting her little store of valuables and books, she took an affectionate farewell of her father, who gave her a letter to the abbess, and, bidding Don Volio a polite adieu, departed, attended by a female ser-

vant, for the convent of St. Catherine in Madrid. Jerome continued watching the carriage, until it disappeared on the distant hills; when he set off for his convent, with a heart too sorrowful and oppressed, to be relieved by the gloomy scenes of a cloister. She arrived at the convent in perfect safety, and, after presenting the servants with a gratuity for their care and attention, hurried through the cloisters to the parlour, and inquired for the abbess. St. Anna entered the apartment with a countenance full of joy.

“My daughter,” said she, “this unexpected visit is more than I should have thought of.”—

Florella burst into a flood of tears, and delivered the letter to her mother. She opened it with a trembling hand, and her undisguised horror, at seeing the signature of Jerome, compelled her to refrain, for a few minutes, reading the contents. They were as follow:

“This letter, my beloved St. Anna,

is written on the very spot where I first seduced your affections, under the sacred guise of friendship. Every idea of that crime is attended with an unconquerable degree of sorrow. Accident lately placed me in a situation, where the tender attention of a father became requisite for the salvation of our child. Ah, St. Anna! the beautiful Florella has been married to a villain. He proved to be the servant of the Marquis of Meridas, whom he murdered in Germany, and has, for some time, assumed the title of his master, and been in possession of his property. He deceived you with a letter, said to be written by the uncle of the marquis, but which he forged. He has treated the unhappy Florella with brutal and cruel severity. He now moulders with the dead in the prison of the Inquisition; and she is returned to claim the protection of, I hope, an indulgent and affectionate mother.

JEROME."

She felt the consciousness of her temerity,

in hastening the celebration of a marriage, upon such trivial evidence of Gazala's title to the property of the Asturas' family, as the production of a few letters from Don John de Modena.

"Lament not," she exclaimed, as she pressed her daughter to her bosom, "your unfortunate situation. I own my indiscretion was great; but, to guard against guilt and insincerity, is beyond the ordinary powers of the human mind. I shall ever curse the hour when I resigned myself to the fatal influence of pride and credulity."

She paused, and, in a faltering tone, inquired of her daughter, to what convent Jerome was banished, and if she ever heard him mention her name?

"He is now residing," said she, "in a convent of White Penitents in Arragon, and I heard him call upon your name, and curse his perfidious conduct towards you, in the height of unfeigned distress."

"My God!" she cried, as she sunk into a chair, "what feelings are these—this

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unusual trembling?—My heart palpitates—
A sudden coldness steals all over me—I am
faint.—Assist me, Florella!—Oh, Jerome!”

It was some time before the abbess recovered; when she listened to a narration of her daughter's misfortunes, and, considering herself the sole cause of her distress, conjured her to forget her sorrows, and not to dwell upon the remembrance of an ill-fated villanous husband.

“He called on God,” said she, “to witness the justness of his professions: and that God has now punished his impious temerity!”

St. Anna frequently wandered alone, amongst the romantic walks of the garden, at the close of day, to indulge herself in the pleasing task of reflection; for the letter of Jerome revived the mournful remembrance of her love for him, and of interviews almost forgotten. As she perused it, she would frequently exclaim—

“Written on the very spot, where he

first beguiled me with the fair form of friendship! Oh, merciful God! And yet my mind, ever active to resent that base and premeditated injury, cannot now resist the impulse of an unrequited and destructive passion."

The misfortunes of Abelard and Eloisa became her constant study; and those hours, once devoted to prayer, she spent in weeping over their mutual sufferings, with the tenderest feelings of sympathy. She now experienced the effect of an erroneous opinion, too frequently entertained by the sex, that the inexorable rigours of a monastic life can finally eradicate the natural sensibility of their being; and that ill usage will compel them to forget, that they are fallible.—Vain, and irrational ideas!—She concealed her sensations from the sisterhood, and attended to the concerns of her holy family as usual; but, at midnight, Eloisa could not repeat, with more emphasis than St. Anna,

Tears still are mine, and those I need not spare;
 Love but demands what else were shed in prayer.
 No happier task these faded eyes pursue;
 To read, and weep, is all they now can do.

The vaulted aisles, and solitary avenues, were alone her chief resort in her leisure hours. Her fondness for Florella increased; and, instead of lamenting the villany of Gazala, she rejoiced in her return to the order: she inspired her with a love for religion, but checked, at the same time, the growing influence of enthusiasm. She particularly explained to her the origin of religious establishments; the means by which they acquired such fatal influence over mankind; the vicious intercourse carried on between the votaries of both sexes, under the mask of religion; and the real and meritorious designs of such institutions. Florella looked upon her situation in a light very different from the generality of the nuns. She justly considered the convent an asylum for the unfortunate, and not as the prison house of religious devo-

tees. St. Anna too soon experienced those fatal effects, which flow from indulging the pleasing sorrows of returning love: she was seized with a fever; and the mind, unable to free itself from the task of supporting in sickness the heavy load of affliction, yielded to its influence, and she became delirious. After some weeks had elapsed, the abbess recovered; and, looking back upon her past conduct with a degree of shame, blushed at the remembrance of her weakness, and endeavoured, although in vain, to recover her wonted character. One evening, as she wandered for the air with Florella in the garden, a letter was brought to her by a sister:—she stopped, and, looking wildly at her daughter, hurried her along with her to the cell. She there, on opening the fatal letter, swooned on her mattress. Florella, struck with horror at the circumstance, examined the letter, and found that it came from Jerome.

The friar reached his convent during the night, and throwing himself, as he entered

his cell, upon his couch, gave himself up to the horrors of his conscience. He had privately studied the religious principles of Luther; and that zealous protestant being then well known in Italy, Jerome, after signing a violent abjuration of his catholic opinions, fled from the sect in the night, and bent his way towards the confines of France. During his journey, he publicly preached in fields and solitudes the doctrines of Luther; and, having gained a few illiterate followers, he commanded them to sign a recantation of their catholic principles. The news, however, spread abroad; and, ere he had reached the foot of the Pyrennees, the familiars of the Inquisition overtook him, and, seizing him and his partizans, carried them to the dungeons of that fatal prison. He was instantly recognised with astonishment by Don Medilla de Grado. As he questioned him with haughty severity, respecting his conduct, the friar proudly exclaimed—

“I am a murderer! And, when I look back upon the errors of my life, my imagination pictures to me the dreadful punishment that awaits the guilty; and yet have I received, from the hand of an holy and religious friar, the consolatory administration of absolution for all my past crimes! He told me to rely upon the faith of his religious benedictions for the salvation of my perjured soul; and yet am I still the prey of tormenting reflections. Is it possible for me to believe that a monk can eradicate, or even protract, the miseries resulting from iniquity? Can he wash out, with consecrated water, the remembrance of those bloody and cruel transactions, which I sanctioned and committed, under the mask of this Holy Creed? De Carros and Biffare moulder in their unhallowed graves. Oh God! they died unjustly! Can I forget, that these hands for ever will appear steeped in their blood? Can I forget my despicable treatment to St. Anna and Florella? Can the pre-

cepts of that religion, which authorises its votaries to pursue the system of persecution, and indulge themselves with lawless and cruel decrees against Innocence and Virtue, assist the serious meditations of a mind labouring under the horrors of a guilty conscience? Oh, no! I have been made a villain by my religion, but cannot find in it the virtuous excellence of oblivion. From this hour I abjure the Creed of our most holy catholic faith—and, through the mediation of our blessed Saviour, implore the mercy of an insulted, but all-forgiving God. The sacred law requires that blood should be the price of blood; and, whether spilt by the executioner or the criminal, will, I hope, if it is possible to be credited, expiate the crime that demands such a dreadful punishment. It is but momentary; my mind is made up to it: prepare your racks and flames; I fear them not: for I die a martyr to the most abandoned and blasphemous Creed of the catholic faith.”

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It is impossible to conceive the astonishment this speech created in the minds of the Inquisitors. Jerome, late one of their confederates, convicted of heresy, called forth their severest indignation. He was instantly condemned to die by fire.

On hearing his sentence—

“Exult, imprisoned soul!” he cried, as they dragged him to his dungeon, “in the triumph thou hast completed.”

It was there, that he wrote the letter to St. Anna, which contained the following words:

“You will, my beloved St. Anna! no doubt hear with surprise, that I am now under sentence of death in this damnable Inquisition. I have abandoned the precepts of my religion, and glory in the act: for I have found more essential comfort in the doctrines of Luther, than in midnight prayer, and hypocritical sanctity. My crimes are great; but, I trust, I shall be forgiven. Was I conscious that you would

shed one tear for the fate of him, who has ever lamented his barbarous conduct towards you, with severe and unfeigned contrition, death would be embraced with tenfold felicity. To-morrow I am to meet my fate at the stake; the hour is eight in the evening. When you see the clouds of smoke ascend, the soul of Jerome will be wafted to the throne of heaven; and, there only, will it shudder at the sentence of the eternal JUDGE. I tremble not at the torments I am about to suffer, but exult in my recantation. Adieu, my St. Anna!—adieu, my beloved Florella!—My daughter—think of me when I am no more; and forget, in the remembrance of my sufferings, those detested crimes, which were the bane of my existence. Adieu, farewell for ever!

JEROME."

When St. Anna recovered from her indispotion, she read the letter as one in distraction.

"At eight," she exclaimed, "he quits this world for ever!"

Tears burst from her eyes, as she looked with horror towards the towers of the Inquisition; and absorbed, as it were, in grief, the time passed unnoticed, until the fatal hour; when, accidentally turning her eyes to heaven, she saw large columns of smoke ascend, and roll horribly, amidst the coming gloom of night, to the sky. She immediately quitted her cell, and ran, shrieking with distress, to a solitude in the garden, where Florella and some of the sisters found her stretched lifeless on the ground. They bore her back to the convent, and, with the greatest difficulty, restored her to her senses. She sat at her window during the night, with her swollen eyes turned towards the prison; and as, at intervals, the sparks floated in the air, when the ashes were removed, she shed a thousand tears in the anguish of her soul, and, from that moment, vowed to immure herself no longer in the gloomy ways of a monastery. She looked upon the emblems of idolatry, which surrounded her, with an

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eye of horror; and, as she mused alone upon her misfortunes in solitude, she wrote the following lines:

REFLECTIONS IN SOLITUDE.

YE time-worn domes, all hallow'd and divine,
 Where rays of glory on the virtuous shine;
 When dire misfortune, in my early years,
 Doom'd me to constant misery and tears;
 I then, impassion'd, sought your blest abode,
 And gave my life a sacrifice to God.
 But now, when summon'd by the taper's light,
 To waste in penitence the hours of night,
 Or hear the death bell tolling, sad and slow,
 The solemn anthem, and the voice of woe;
 No more my mind with bigotry adores
 These dusky emblems of immortal powers;
 Nor Superstition's holy law reveres
 But mourns its frailty, with unceasing tears.
 My breaking heart now prompts me to declare,
 'Tis love that guides it from the ways of prayer;
 And shuns with horror these prophetic glooms,
 Dim walks of death, begirt with mould'ring tombs.
 For here pale Melancholy oft retires,
 And youth, enslav'd, in pious dreams expires;
 Here beauty blooms, unseen, in dreary shades,
 Haunts, that no footstep from the world invades;

And wretched orphans, with injustice driv'n,
 To seek for comfort in the thoughts of heav'n,
 Droop o'er their ills, and silently complain,
 Bewildered victims of the troubled brain.
 Say, can the organ's soul inspiring tones,
 Cold marble statues, deck'd with human bones,
 Lone midnight watchings, veils, or friars grave,
 Heal the deep wound, that first Affection gave?
 Oh, no! Each awful rite may serve to move
 The soul to piety. The heart to love
 Will ever yield a fond endearing slave,
 Till sorrow sinks the victim to the grave.
 When last I witness'd, in the face of heav'n,
 A beauteous sister to oblivion giv'n,
 Methought I heard, beside the sacred shrine,
 Some angel whisper, with a voice divine—
 'Fly, fly the curse! thy God will ne'er require
 'The soul's repentance in eternal fire,
 'For one transgression, one unholy deed,
 'By reason sanction'd, and by love decreed.
 'And though no father, husband, brother, friend,
 'With deep felt grief thy funeral rites attend—
 'Nor yonder aisle, which glim'ring lamps illumine,
 'Indulge thy ashes with a sculptur'd tomb—
 'When the pale moon beam sheds its trembling
 'light,
 'And Contemplation hails the placid night—
 'Beside thy moss-grown grave, in lonely dell,
 'Shall sorrowing sisters in devotion dwell;

' And mourn beneath the glitt'ring willow's shade,
 ' That hides th' unhallow'd spot where thou art
 ' laid,
 ' Their kindred suff'rings ; as to distant skies,
 ' Attendant spirits waft their plaintive sighs ;
 ' And, in their airy course, aloud proclaim,
 ' Through heaven's wide way, thy consecrated
 ' name.'

The sisters had now learned the cause of her distress ; and, fearful her conduct might endanger the moral habits of her sect, or eradicate their love for solitude and celibacy, she determined upon quitting the convent, and retiring into Switzerland.— Her unconquerable affection for Jerome also required such a step ; for the scenes around her, only served to heighten the severity of melancholy reflection.

Every thing being prepared, St. Anna, attended by the weeping sisterhood, quitted the monastery at midnight, and, accompanied by her daughter, travelled with the greatest dispatch until she reached Lausanne.

It was in a small romantic village near that town, where she fixed her residence. Their cottage was situated at the foot of a mountain, covered with the most beautiful shrubs, where she erected an altar, sacred to the loves of Abelard and Eloisa, and, in the remembrance of her own misfortunes, found, that love, once known, can never be forgotten. Her attention to the inhabitants soon endeared her to them all; and Florella attracted the notice of the curate, a man not in years, but a protestant, and of a turn of mind peculiarly adapted to that of St. Anna. She encouraged his visits, by becoming his pupil in religious sentiments, and, in a little time, succeeded in uniting him to her daughter. To the decline of life their days were spent in innocent and uninterrupted pleasure; and St. Anna, in the contemplation of Florella's happiness, regretted not the frailty of her nature in youth, nor the indiscreet consummation of her daughter's marriage with Gazala.

CHAPTER XI.

"YE valleys low, where the mild whispers use,
 Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
 On whose fresh lap the Swart star sparsely looks,
 Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes;
 Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
 With cowslips wan, that hang their pensive head,
 And flourets, of a thousand hues,
 To strew the laureat hearse, where Lycid lies."

MILTON.

AT the end of the second day's journey,
 the travellers stopt at a cottage, by the road
 side, and inquired the nearest way to the
 chateau de Brun.

The peasant directed them up a long and
 beautiful valley, at the end of which Don
 Alphonso discovered the garden wall of his
 villa. Some servants were waiting his ap-
 proach, and, on their arrival at the gate,
 ushered the party into the house, where a
 repast was set before them, in a parlour or-
 namented with descriptive figures, worked
 in tapestry, from the ballads of the most

pleasing poets. The house was situated on the top of an eminence, that commanded an extensive prospect over the surrounding country, which was beautifully diversified with wood, water, and mountain scenery. Cleanthe would often wander by moonlight with Angelo, amongst the neighbouring romantic wilds, to muse upon the picturesque and sublime scenes with which they abounded; and, when the evening bird sung sweet in the deepest solitude of the grove, to relieve her mind from melancholy reflections, she turned her thoughts to the study of poetry——An amusement, which never fails in producing its effect; whether written under the pressure of sorrow, or in the sweet delirium of love. In a part of the ruins she wrote the following lines :

PERCHANCE 'tis here, that poor Misfortune's
 child,
 Some beauteous vestal, Love's devoted slave,
 The ling'ring hours in penitence beguil'd,
 Or, hopeless, found a refuge in the grave.

For, as I pace this mould'ring ruin round,
 Enliven'd only by the wild flower's bloom,
 Methinks an hollow and prophetic sound
 Comes, awful, from some hapless mourner's tomb—
 Again it whispers, " With unhallow'd tread
 " Wake not the sacred slumbers of the dead."
 Spirit,—if such thou art,—I come not here,
 With steps profane, at twilight, to invade
 Thy solemn sanctuary, or sainted tow'r;
 But wander, at this dark and pleasing hour,
 In silent solitude's deserted shade,
 To mourn a fate, distracting and severe—
 To ease a heart, with misery oppress'd,
 By fortune sorrow'd, and by love distress'd.

One evening, as she was taking her accustomed walk in the solitude, a Spanish foldier, apparently worn out with fatigue, and in great distress, inquired the nearest way to the chateau de Brun—

" Yon pathway," said Cleanthe, " leads directly to the house;" and passed on.

As she returned, Angelo met her in the valley. He took her affectionately by the hand, and proceeded some way by her side, ere he spoke.

"Cleanthe," said he, "when we survey the world, with the eyes of compassion and philanthropy, misfortune should not eradicate that sense of gratitude we owe to our Maker, for not placing us in a situation worse than that which we enjoy. If the calamities of this life are such as might force from us the severest reflections, we should recollect, that it is but a pilgrimage to those realms of happiness, where the tear is wiped away, and affliction ceases—"

Cleanthe grasped his hand, and begged him to be brief.

"My mind," said she, "is steeled against the impressions of misfortune, and my heart has almost forgotten its natural sensibility. Your speech, Angelo, seems to be the prelude to some recent calamity; tell me the worst:—what am I to expect?"

"Your brother, Jacques," said he, as he burst into tears, "is dead. Your mother, afflicted at the unexpected news, fell senseless from her chair; and, in the act of raising her from the ground, Alphonso

perceived some marks of blood upon the floor. On a minute examination, he found that she had received a dreadful contusion in the back part of her head from the fall. She now lies dangerous ill, and desires to see you."

Cleanthe raised her eyes to heaven, and addressed herself to the deity—

"If it is thy will, O Lord! that I should go down in sorrow to the grave; no murmuring shall mark me for thy displeasure. My tears, shall be the sacrifices of my heart, upon the altars of piety and resignation. Oh! Angelo, were it possible for me to believe there is an unequal distribution of happiness in this life, I should instance myself as a victim to the Almighty's unmerited wrath—"

She rested upon his arm, and they proceeded, silent and in tears, to the villa.

On her entering the parlour she was met by her father—

"My Cleanthe!" he exclaimed, as he burst into tears, and buried his face in her

bosom—"You will soon be left without a mother!—without a friend, but your disconsolate father. Your brother is no more. His death is confirmed by Bertram, who personates the Spanish soldier, and who saw him committed to the grave."

"Bertram!" she shrieked—"Merciful God!—where am I?—Oh, heavens! my long lost love.—But, my mother!"—

She sunk into a chair, and remained for some time with her eyes fixed on the ground, as if in a state of insensibility: but grief, when it has gained the mastery of the heart, cannot long be concealed; it will either waste itself in floods of tears, or prey upon the mind in melancholy silence. Although her beloved Bertram, whom she had so long been separated from, was by her side, she continued to gaze upon her father with the wildest look of horror, till summoned to her mother's chamber.---As she entered the apartment, her steps trembled, and an involuntary dread had nearly deprived her of her senses. Supported by her father, she

reached the bed side; but when the curtains were drawn back, and she discovered her mother, pale and emaciated—when her eyes glanced upon her dearest friend, and observed the livid languor of death spreading itself over her countenance—when she saw the tear steal down her cheek, as she stretched forth her hand to Cleanthe, with paternal fondness, she sunk senseless into her father's arms, and for some hours remained in the most violent and distressing convulsions. On her recovery she desired to see her mother—but Clarinda was no more—she had died during the illness of her daughter.

When this awful circumstance was communicated to her, she rushed into the chamber, and, throwing herself upon the body, bathed it with floods of tears.

“Cruel Providence!” she exclaimed, “why was it ordained, that I should be the sport of unceasing misery? What have I done, to deserve these unparalleled calamities?”

She paused, and, after gazing wildly upon the corpse for some minutes, addressed herself in fervent prayer to heaven.

About the hour of midnight, Bertram, with the domestics who were watching the body, persuaded her to retire to rest; and, as they were leading her from the bed side, her father entered the room, pale and breathless. He spoke not to any one, but, hurrying to the body, kissed it, with seeming impassioned pleasure.

“My father!” said Cleanthe.

“My daughter!”

A burst of sorrow ensued.

“I have in my dreams suffered beyond description. I thought your mother came to me, as I reposed upon a verdant bank near the ruins where we found Don Angelo, and warned me, in a voice of sweetest melody, to prepare for death. I rose to clasp her in my arms, but she vanished.—The striking of the convent clock roused me from slumber. I fled hither, not knowing where I went.—What, if these dread-

ful images, that float upon the brain, should be realized? What, if you should be left, an orphan, in a world of villany, exposed to unfeeling censure and contempt?"

"Oh God!" she exclaimed, "talk not of such distracting events;—let me persuade you to retire to rest. I will do the same. Sleep will be of service to us both."

He embraced her affectionately, and parted with her at his chamber door.

For many days did the miserable Cleanthe visit the chamber, and weep over the body of her beloved mother; and, when laid in the coffin, she dressed it with the sweetest flowers that grew in the solitary wild near the villa.

The evening at length arrived, when the disconsolate husband and Cleanthe were to follow her mother to the grave. She was buried, at her own desire, in a solitude of the neighbouring convent garden, at the hour of midnight.

When the procession reached the gate, a funeral bell was tolling, and the brother-

hood waiting in the court-yard to receive it. Some carried in their hands a cross or lighted taper, some strewed fresh blown flowers upon the ground, whilst a select party ranged themselves on each side the coffin, and sung a melancholy dirge. The following lines were engraved upon a tablet, and fixed over her grave:

Stranger! beneath this dewy mould,
Where early flowers their buds unfold,

A mother's ashes rest:

With no unholy passion tear
The tributes of the vernal year,
With which the turf is drest.

But here, at eve, in lonely wild,
With mute Affection's forrowing child,
Her sacred virtues mourn;

Or, 'neath yon ancient hallow'd yew,
With sympathetic tears bedew
The moss-grown, mould'ring urn.

It was Don Angelo's intention, at some favourable period, to visit the remains of his wife, in the sepulchre amongst the ruins. He chose this opportunity of com-

pleting his desire, and proposed that Don Alphonso should accompany him.

“It will in some measure,” said he, “relieve your mind from those melancholy reflections, which every day force you into solitude, to weep over the memory of the lost Cleanthe. Your grief will continue its severity, whilst you remain here; for, if you only wander in the garden, the drooping flowers, that were planted by her hand, call forth your compassionate protection. You gaze upon them in tears. You leave them with regret. By travelling, the mind will be relieved; for, after having visited the ruins, we will proceed to the Pyrennees.”

“I never can forget her,” said Alphonso, as he clasped his hands together, with pious resignation: “for, if I shed not my tears at her tomb, or in the solitudes of these beloved scenes, where we once roved together, climate and variety cannot root out the sweets of reflection.—I call them sweets, Angelo; for there is a secret pleasure in distress, which no one but those who

have felt it can imagine. But I will accompany you."

Previous to the departure of Angelo and Alphonso, Bertram was, by the advice and with the approbation of both parties, married to his Cleanthe; who, anxious to know the subsequent adventures that befel him when Roderigo tore them asunder in the castle, requested he would relate them. They were as follow:—

"After that fatal night," said he, "in which we were betrayed to Roderigo by Dorinda, my mind became the seat of melancholy and despair; for, concluding that the villain had stabbed you, I felt a degree of contempt for my existence, that almost bordered upon insanity. We travelled all night at a round gallop; and, when the morning broke, I found, by the conversation of my guides, that we were pursuing the high road to France. We stopped for refreshment at the sign of the Golden Eagle, in a small village at the foot of the Pyrennees, and there I opened the note which

was thrown into my prison by Gordez. The purport of it was this :

‘ The two men, who are to conduct you on your journey, are ignorant of the roads. As soon as the party leave them, make the best of your time, and try to escape by stratagem.’

“ Although the note did not convey that intelligence which I expected, I fully understood its meaning, and accordingly, when we had crossed the Pyrennees, and the party quitted company with my two conductors, I took an opportunity, by artful questions, to learn whether they were, or were not, at all acquainted with the route intended to be pursued. They disclaimed all ideas of ignorance, pretending, at the same time, a perfect knowledge of the French roads and bye ways of the country; but I discovered, by certain whisperings and manœuvres, that they intended to hire a guide at the next village. This gave me great satisfaction. I flattered myself that I might, from the few valuables left in my possession, gain him over to my

interest, and, by that means, make my escape. We arrived at a lone house on some mountains, about sun-set; and it was there that the intended guide was hired; but the agreement was so secret, that I knew nothing of the matter until we were about to depart on our journey. The night was very severe; and, although we travelled at a great rate, and my conductors well sheltered from the weather, they grumbled terribly at their occupation. In about an hour after we had quitted the inn, we entered upon a wild and desolate heath. The wind howled mournfully along the waste; and, ere we had proceeded a quarter of a mile, one of my attendants fell very ill. We instantly halted, and, dismounting, laid the poor fellow, half expiring, upon the ground. I then, by his conversation, found our guide to be an old Swiss ostler, apparently full of conceit and hypocrisy.”—

‘There is a house,’ he cried, ‘at a little distance from hence; let me step there for some assistance; the man will die else.’

“The ruffian instantly consented.—I feigned great sorrow on account of the sickness of his companion, and pretended to assist him; but as he stood over the body, apparently in terrible agitation, I contrived to slip into the pathway our guide was pursuing, and fled after him with the greatest precipitation. I was enabled to follow him by the reflection of his light and the sound of his horse’s feet, and continued so close to him, that I could not lose him easily. A light at length darted through a clump of low trees, and, perceiving the old guide quickening the pace of the animal, I exerted myself in proportion. When he alighted at the door of the hut, he rapped loud, and requested admittance. An old man opened the window, and, after hearing his tale, readily gave credit to his report, and joined him with a lantern and some cordials. No sooner were they out of hearing, than I ventured to rap at the door. An old woman appeared at the window, and inquired who I was, and my business. I told her that I was a bewildered traveller,

and begged to know my nearest way to the next village. She gave me a perplexed description of the pathway I was to pursue; but, urged by the terrible idea of again falling into the hands of my conductors, I trusted to my fate, and crossed the dreadful wild in the line she pointed out.—As the morning broke over the hills, I discovered the village spire, and, hastening my steps, gained its entrance before any of the inhabitants were stirring, save a smuggling industrious pawn-broker.—To avoid suspicion, I entered his shop, and exchanged the clothes on my back for a soldier's jacket and trowsers; and, having purchased my accoutrements of him, jogged on merrily to a small passado in the centre of the town, where I stopped for refreshment—I had not been in the kitchen long, before a servant came to me and said, that as I was a spanish Soldier, a gentleman, who was dying in the house, would be glad to see me. A sudden coldness spread all over me: I thought the vil-

lains had discovered me, and took that method to entrap me; but, resolving upon a scuffle before I surrendered, I fixed the bayonet on my musket, and followed the servant to the sick man's chamber. When I approached near the bed, the curtains were drawn back, and my astonishment is incredible, when I beheld your brother Jacques in the arms of death. I desired the servant instantly to quit the room, and made myself known to him. He appeared extremely surprised; but the tear that rolled down his cheek, as he grasped me by the hand, convinced me how happy he felt himself in having a friend by him in his last moments. I inquired how he came in France; but he was too weak to tell me. He requested pen, ink, and paper; they were brought him, and he wrote, almost unintelligibly, that I should find you at the chateau de Brun in Arragon; to go immediately, and report his death; to take every thing he possessed, and see him properly buried. In about an hour after he had done

this, he took me by the hand, and, turning himself upon his pillow, expired without a groan. I inquired, of the physician who attended him, if he knew any thing concerning him; but could gain no information from any person respecting the mysterious business. At the end of three days, I saw poor Jaques carried to the grave; and, after paying the expences he had incurred at the inn, set out for the kingdom of Arragon. I travelled comfortably and uninterrupted, until I arrived in Spain; when, stopping at an inn, to take some refreshment, I saw my conductors saddling their horses in the yard; although it was impossible for them to discover who I was, yet the very knowledge I had of myself caused me to think I looked suspicious, and I trembled every step I took, until I had got many miles beyond the village. From that time I happened with no other circumstance of consequence, but arrived safe in the kingdom of Arragon. I there inquired for the cha-

teau de Brun, and, being directed the nearest way to it by the peasants, found, as I desired, a reward which sufficiently compensates me for all my troubles and misfortunes."

The families of Bertram and Alexo lived in strict friendship; and, as they had suffered together in misfortunes, they now shared the blessings of peace and affluence; whilst Angelo and Alphonso fixed their residence at the foot of the Pyrennees, in a solitary village, for the purpose of meditation and reflection—

"For the energy, necessary to the performance of great actions, elevation of character, and stability and firmness in virtue, is no where so easily acquired as in solitude, and never so efficacious as by religion."

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 17, Vol. I. for "that" read "whom."

— 146, In the second line—"but" dele.

— 158, "In," in the 7th line, dele.

Vol. II.

Page 21, for "previous," read "previously."

— 25, in the poetry, for "warns," read "warn."

— 104, for "letter," read "letters."

— 115, for "attitudes," read "attitudes."

— 186, for "being," read "nature."

— 203, for "dangerous," read "dangerously."

— 130, 131, for "infallibility," read "fallibility."

4 DE 58

